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THE FLOOD OF THESSALY,

&c.

[Procter, Bryan Waller]

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THE
FLOOD OF THESSALY,

THE
GIRL OF PROVENCE,

AND
OTHER POEMS.

(BY BARRY CORNWALL. (pseud.))

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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE reader will consider the first Poem in this volume ("The Flood of Thessaly") as *a sketch only* of the great event which desolated the earlier world. Having abandoned my original intention of publishing a more elaborate Poem on this subject, I am only induced to mention the fact here, in order to account for the chasms which occur, in one or two instances, in the present production.—All reference to the Mosaic account of the Deluge has been purposely avoided.

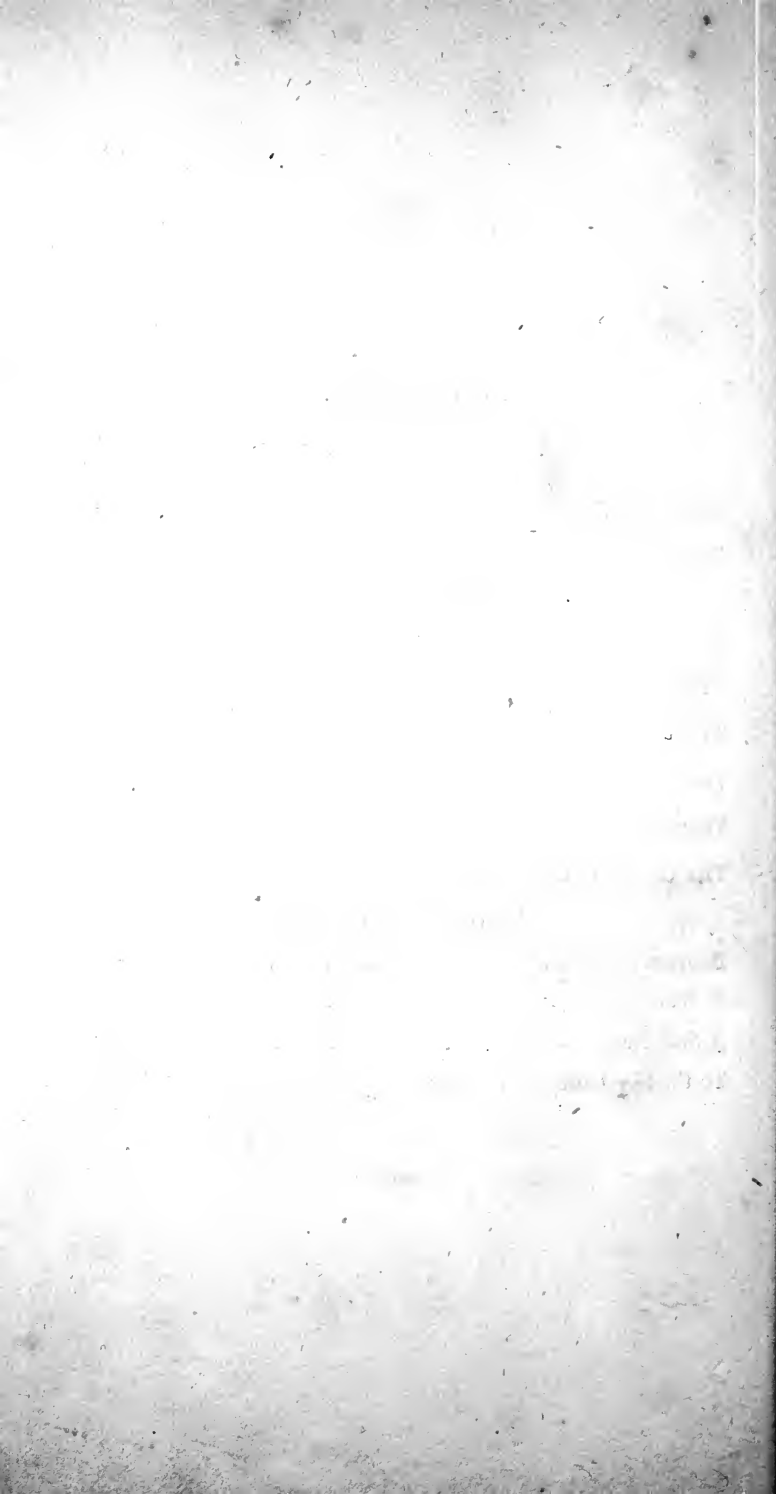
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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Dedicatory Stanzas	1
THE FLOOD OF THESSALY	
Part the First	13
Part the Second	39
THE GIRL OF PROvence	73
THE LETTER OF BOCCACCIO	121
THE FALL OF SATURN	159
TARTARUS. A Sketch	181
THE GENEALOGISTS. A Fragment	207
MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.	
Babylon ; with the Feast of Belshazzar	237
A War Song	243
A Still Place	247
To the Sky-Lark	248



DEDICATORY STANZAS.

" If my slight muse do please these curious days,
The pain be mine, but thine be all the praise."

SHAKESPEARE, *Sonnet 38.*

I.

ART thou still absent?—Then, a strange bright dream
Bore thee unto me in its shadowy arms.—

Ah! come again,—so like a pleasant gleam

Of light, that I (free from unjust alarms)

May gaze on my illuminated theme,

And read thy varying smiles and many charms,

And swear by the great Love to love thee long,

Beyond ambition, or the light of song.

II.

Come!—I will crown thee with the fairest flowers
That ever sprang beneath the eyes of May,
When Flora and the wind (young paramours)
Were whispering caught in woods at dawn of day,
And those that blossom quick in April showers,
Or when the Autumn rivers run astray :—
All flowers thou shalt have which perfume yield,
From fountain, lake, or forest,—garden,—field.

III.

And first of all the rose ; because its breath
Is rich beyond the rest, and when it dies
It doth bequeath a charm to sweeten death,
And violets whose looks are like the skies,
And that sad flow'r for which, as story saith,
Echo the nymph once pined, until her sighs
Allured some god to charm her into stone,
And snow-drops winter-born, pining alone.

IV.

And Hyacinth whom Zephyr's jealous wing
Slew, and Apollo changed to some soft star :
The lily, of all children of the spring
The palest,—fairest too where fair ones are ;
And woodbines which like fondest lovers cling
Round trees that spread their sheltering arms afar ;
And flow'rs that turn to meet the sun-light clear,
And those which slumber when the night is near.

V.

These and all others :—whatsoe'er is best
Beloved by thee shall *I* refuse to claim ?
The sweetest shall between thy palms be prest ;
The nameless—thou shalt kiss and give them name ;
The whitest on thy bosom white shall rest,—
Alas ! not so, for then they lose their fame :
Not so ; but rather shall each flower be
Rank'd and high-honour'd as it aideth thee.

VI.

Sweet friend ! my soul is haunted by a vow
To dedicate (frail work !) this book to thee :
With all its weakness—all its errors, *thou*
Wilt prize the wandering verse that comes from *me*,
Past its poor merit ; and perhaps thy brow—
Lovely beyond that old idolatry,
Which grew to life from marble, (so decreed
Venus) may lose a care as thou shalt read.

VII.

And yet thine eye, so summer-bright at times,
When sorrow is not (wherefore ever ?) there,
May melancholy wane before my rhymes,
And thy young heart may tremble in its lair,
And sigh for her, that girl of southern climes,
Who died because she loved a vision rare :
Pale heathen ! languishing like one whose brain
Is sun-stricken on some unshelter'd plain.

VIII.

—Said I not, maiden mine, that I would swear
Before bright Love, the God, to love thee long ?
Oh ! yes, and to the world proclaim how fair,
How very fair thou art, even among
Beauties who beautiful accounted are.
This duty to thy poet doth belong :
Therefore I swear to thee, by the sweet pain
Of love, to love thee ever,—though in vain.

IX.

I swear to thee by all who have famous been !
By lovers who have died to live in song !
By Ariadne pining near the green
Ocean, while Theseus' vessel skimm'd along !
By Dido left forlorn,—sad Carthage queen,
Who ended on the pile Love's bitter wrong !
By Phaon's lover plunging from the steep !
By pale Laodamia doomed to weep !—

X.

By all who reach'd in life a happier fate
Thro' Love's dim mystic mazes ! By that day
When Peleus wedded Thetis in such state !
And by those balmy nights when Cupid lay
By Psyche,—tho' at last he lingered late,
And she beheld, and so he fled away.
By all the moonlight hours when Dian lone
Drank in the breathings of Endymion !

XI.

By this—by all—by every other tale
Fabled or true, happy or dark with woe ;
By that, which e'er it is, that doth prevail
Over the rest : and by twin hearts that know
Themselves so well that nought can e'er avail
To kill their faith or lay sweet passion low ;
(Yet lovers' hearts should armed be always,
Lest Love, when doubt is born, chance to decay.)

XII.

—Yet wherefore thus? Ah! wherefore not have sworn
At once by thy fair self,—thy spotless truth,
By thy quick sense of all that can adorn
Woman, thy modest pride, thy words that soothe
A brightness into beauty like the morn,
Which else might dim thy clear and gentle youth,
Or make the world forget that thou wert young—
Why by thyself have I not said or sung?—

XIII.

I know not:—How I write or how have writ
The muse, who mistress is, alone can tell:
Bright causer of the poet's pleasant fit,
Who when *she* well is cherish'd, rhymeth well;
A fair ally of thy most playful wit
Is she, and my true passion. Who may tell
But we may live, all three, familiar friends,
As one dull colour with two brighter blends!

XIV.

Perhaps together we may journey soon
(Her wings are sinewy-strong and fit to bear)
Where once Astolpho went, and meet the moon
Tracking her desert—the blue boundless air,
Like thing half lost. 'Tis now but early June,
And time there is while days are long and fair
To taste the sights bards say are something worth :—
And who will miss us, sweet, from this dull earth?

XV.

None, none :—Our course—*my* course, at least, has been
Humble and sad from my most childish time :
Tho' thou indeed hast plucked some pleasures green,
The offspring of a near, less-cloudy clime :
More likely then to judge, from what thou'st seen,
Of things which hitherto have dwelt in rhyme ;
So shalt thou master, I the pupil be,
When we set sail to reach the lunar sea.

XVI.

Perhaps we there may find bright creatures straying,
Whose light would perish in this clouded world,—
Like her who went thro' Athens' woods a-straying
By night, but slept by day in cowslips curl'd ;
Or Ariel, haunting sprite, who wept obeying
The frown of Prosper, and his blue wings furled
In sorrow when he met his master's scorn :
That peerless spirit,—so true, tho' beauty-born.

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XVII.

—Here rest I.—Sickness like a film hath spread
Over mine eye and dimmed its little light,
Since what is writ was writ—(not fable-bred,
But such as truest poets love to write)—
And now methinks I commerce with the dead,
And face the shadowy angel in his might.
—'Tis gone ; and melancholy dreams and pain
And scorn of all I do alone remain.

XVIII.

And Fame doth seem a bubble that may burst,
Pierced by an ignorant pen or selfish hate ;
And Fortune like a vision vainly nursed,
Whose golden strength a breath may dissipate ;
And Love—yet am I not so sickness-cursed
As rail against the *bounty* of my fate.
What I may never look on let me scorn ;
But *thou* art to me like the risen morn.

XIX.

Thou livest in my heart, thro' distance—time,
'Midst fickle friendships and fantastic joys,
Alone a truth :—Like Love, which is sublime,
Thy sweet smile elevates and never cloys ;
And thou art all the beauty of this rhyme,
The brightness, and the spirit that now buoys
A verse which else would fall.—O lady mine !
Gaze on it till it grows like thee,—divine.

THE
FLOOD OF THESSALY.

PART THE FIRST.



THE
FLOOD OF THESSALY.

PART THE FIRST.

— Genus mortale sub undis
Perdere, et ex omni nimbos dimittere cœlo.

Ovid. Metam.

IN THESSALY, while yet the world was young,—
Soon after Chaos, touched with light and form,
Lost its vague being, and sprung up alarm'd
To beautiful order,—in the pleasant vale
Of Tempé, where the meadows still are green,
The waters bright, the forests flourishing,
Lived Pyrrha and the young Deucalion.
—She was Pandora's child, who in gone days

Had for her dowry that most deadly gift
Which filled the world with pain : His sire was called
Prometheus, the great Titan, who lay stretch'd
Huge as a mammoth on the barren edge
Of Caucasus, where day by day, earth-lured,
Jove's bird, the ravenous vulture, like a cloud
Came sailing by the sun to feast on blood.
He was the Titan's son ; yet did he bow
To Themis and before great Jove who reigned
Supreme upon the hills Olympian :
First God and reigning spirit was *he* who hurled
The scythed Saturn from his ancient throne,
And cast him with an arm unfilial
Headlong from out the skies, to walk the earth
Undeified, where as a man he taught
The Latian people many an useful art,
And shed the golden time o'er Italy.

Pyrrha and young Deucalion !—fair names
As ever shone in fable or old song,
Tradition or recording history :
In green youth were they lovers, tho' scarce known

The bud which after blossom'd into love ;
Still lovers, tho' now wedded with consent
Of their own gentle hearts, before the face
Of all the stars that crowd the summer sky.
How beautiful they were may not be told ;
Yet both were beautiful, and one so fair
That when her glossy ringlets downwards fell,
Serpenting o'er her shoulders smooth and white
As marble, (such the Parians wrought) she seemed
A happy Dryad from the woods escaped,
Or Naiad who had left her watery cave
Content to dwell with man : — Deucalion trod
The green earth as the feathered herald trod,
(Jove's son and starry Maia's,—always young)
And round about his temples the black curls
Hung thick, and clustering left his forehead bare.
His eye was like the eagle's, wild and keen,
And his mouth parted but to speak of love :
Not huge, yet giant-sprung, his towering youth
Rose into manhood, like a Titan born.

Disraeli -
1830.

Careless of all the world save one sweet care,
And in each other lost they dreamt away

The hours, well pleased on fragrant lawns to stray
In balmy autumn, or thro' summer groves,
Or beside fountains where the noonday heat
Came never ; gentlest Pyrrha silent then,
And listening to her lover's voice so low,
Which, while it languish'd or spoke soft reproach,
Hung like sweet music in her charmed ear.

At last they wed : No voice of parent spoke
Ungentle words which now too often mar
Life's first fair passion : then no gods of gold
Usurping swayed with bitter tyranny
'That sad domain the heart. Love's rule was free,
(Ranging through boundless air and happy heaven,
And earth) when Pyrrha wed the Titan's son.
—The winds sang at their nuptial gentle tunes,
And roses opened, on whose crimson hearts
The colour of love is stamped ; and odours rare
Came steaming from the morn-awakening flow'rs,
Which then forgot to close : Thessalian pipes
Were heard in vallies, and from thickets green
The Sylvens peeped delighted, then drew back
And shouted thro' the glades : Wood nymphs lay then

Beside the banks of running rivers, glad
 For once to hear the shepherd's simple song ;
 And many a pleasant strife that night was had
 On oaten reed and pastoral instrument,
 Beneath the mild eye of the quiet moon.
 " Joy to Pandora's child ! Supreme delight
 To the great Titan's son !" —all shouted forth.
 " Joy !" and the words went through the far vales
 sounding,

And thro' the forests tall, and over hills
 And dells, where slumberous melancholy streams
 Awoke and gave an echo. In dark woods
 The wild horse started from his midnight sleep,
 And shook his mane and shrilly spoke aloud.
The Nightingale lay silent in the leaves,
For joy was grief to her : the timorous sheep
 Were silent ; and the backward-glancing hare
 Lay close, and scarce the wild deer stirred the fern.

O happy amorous hours ! O gentlest night !
 When Pleasure left her home with winged Love :—
 How often was that night in after times

Brought back ! How often looks all light went
forth,

And kisses pressed on lips glistening with dew,
And words more soft than zephyr ever breathed
In May, and sighs more soft than any word.
On the swift pinions of untired delight
Passed the bright year ; and one fair infant, while
On the young mother's swelling breast it lay,—
Lay like a sleeping flower, blooming lone
In beauty, with no sweet companion nigh,
Drew heart to heart, and with unconscious power
Breathed pleasures new, pure, and ineffable.
—A lovely sight it was, when from his toil
Returning, or grave thought, or mountain sport,
Deucalion reached his home. By the rude door
Grew sycamore and limes whose branches hung
Like amorous tresses, and around whose trunks
The honey-suckle wound its fragrant arms ;
And laurels always green and myrtle-flowers
Were there, which shook their white buds to the
moon,

And there, long waiting his return, was she,

The gentlest Pyrrha, who each happy day
Gathered her fairest fruits to welcome him.

Thus did the God-descended Titan dwell
Thro' hours and months of joy ; Pyrrha the while,
Meek handmaid, happy mother, fondest wife
And faithful, to her most harmonious thoughts
Gave voice, and uttered music to the morn ;
And told how grateful was she to the skies,
To silence, and the air, which on its wings
Carried her sweet thanks past the farthest tops
Of Pelion, and grey Ossa, and beyond
Lone Athos, thro' the golden gates of Jove,—
Where on imperial cloud he singly sits,
Pavilioned by the rainbows, but uncrowned
Save by his hyacinthine locks which hang
Down like a cloud, and cast for ever out
Quick splendours, fiercer than are seen at noon
When bright Apollo wears his Syrian rays.
There sits he in his state, and there around
Stand all the Olympian gods and shapes, save one,
Juno his Queen, who near his feet reclines.

—From that high station Jove doth watch the world :
Its happiness and woe ; its good and evil ;
Its many hopes, and dumb unspoken doubts,
And the first births of error ; lonely pain ;
Madness, and mirth, and heart-corroding care ;
And fears which plough the forehead with deep lines,
Like wisdom ; and electric thought that springs
Like lightning from the inspired poet's brain.

Thus, bound in amorous chains, the lovers lived.—
Meantime, in Thessaly the times were rank :
Men grew degenerate ; women sank abased ;
And childhood lost its smile, and age its claim
To honour. Jove upon his skiey throne
Heard now no incense rise, no prayer, no thanks ;
But, in their stead, commotions that shook towns,
Curses and vain defiance laughing loud :
And black abominations and foul thoughts
Were bred and nourished, till the heart became
Spotted as with a plague.—
Then Falsehood first was known, lean Avarice, Hate,
Hot Vengeance, and the virgin's ravishment,

Cunning, and Theft; and Murder stalked abroad,
Till sleep forsook the night and Fear was born.—
Such sin was never done nor stain beheld
Thro' wide creation since the world began,
Save when Jehovah shot his fiery rain
Down on Gomorrah, and that city razed
And ruined, and its tenants all destroyed.

Jove saw the sin, and o'er his forehead large
(Whereon, as on a map, the world is seen)
There passed the shadow of a storm.—‘*Behold!*’
He said; and as he spoke the vassal skies
Trembled, and white Olympus to its heart
Sickened and shook: then, stretching wide abroad
His sceptre which doth compass land and sea,
He pointed towards the ocean caverns, where
Upon his coral bed the sea-god lay
Reposing:—thro’ the hollows of the deep
Where tempests come not, and thro’ all the caves
Of that green world and watery palaces,
The word resounded:—from his bed uprose
The brother of Jove, and with a sign replied.

Then in a moment from their quartered homes
The winds came muttering,—West and blighting East,
And South ; while Boreas prison-doomed and mad
Flew to the North, and shivering branch and trunk
Lifted the billows till their curling heads
Struck the pale stars.—At last the wet South hung
Brooding alone, down-weighed by cloud and shower,
And bound in black, mourning the coming doom,
And with his raven wings and misty breath
Allured the storms. Wide-stretching clouds around
(A dark confederacy) in silence met,
Hiding all Heaven. Towards the glooming shore
The tempest sailed direct, and on the top
Of Pelion burst and swept away its pines
By thousands :—Where it burst a way was made
Like that torn by the avalanche, when it falls
Louder than crashing thunder, amidst smoke
And ruin, bounding from the topmost Alps
O'er chasm and hill, and strips the forests bare.

Oh ! woe, deep woe to fruitful Thessaly !
That tempest-shock sounded all o'er the land,

And men left their low dwellings, and came forth
And saw the sheeted cataracts gush from Heaven,
Like rivers that had burst their bonds, and fall
Darkening the day, until those ceaseless floods
Drowned and destroyed the herbs and bended corn,
Flowers and fruits, the wealth of all the year.—
For a time the earth drank in the mighty rains ;
For a time,—but sated soon, morasses shone
Where plains had stretched, and rippling rivers left
Their channels old and wandered far away.
Upon a hilly slope lay Pyrrha's home
Still safe from the rising waters ; yet she feared.
“ Deucalion ! ”—(on their mossy bed they lay,
And heard without the hissing rain descend.)
“ Deucalion ! Ah ! I fear, Deucalion,
The gods are angered ; not with thee, dear friend,
For, tho' the Titan's son, thy vows have been
Constant, thine actions holy. Unto Jove
And Themis have we bowed and prayed—in vain :
For lo ! the storms are out, and Heaven is dark
Perpetually. Apollo now no more
Rises at morning nor at evening fades ;

And Dian, who when the year was wasting looked
But pale amidst the fighting elements,
Hath vanish'd quite : the stars are gone ; the day
Hath died :—the earth itself passeth away.”—
Thus spoke that gentle woman and lay still,
Weeping and full of fears : Deucalion took
Her nearer to his heart :—“ Themis is just,”
Sighing he said, “ and kind, and tho’ a frown
Hath hung upon the forehead of great Jove
Awhile, yet clearer light will come at last,
And he will smile and we rejoice again.
Believe it, love : and know, a dream—a thought
How thou may’st yet be saved hath come to me,
And I will labour long and shape a raft
Wherein upon the rough wave thou shalt pass
To happier shores, sweet Pyrrha.”—Still she sighed,
While he, still soothing, from her forehead pale
Parted the dark brown hair, and pressed thereon
His lips in silence. Thus, heart-folded close
She wept away her fears, and slumber fell
Like snow-down on her :—Quietly she slept
Without a dream until the morning came.

Morn came : but that broad light which hung so
long

In heaven forsook the showering firmament.—
The clouds went floating on their fatal way.
Rivers had grown to seas : the great sea swol'n
Too mighty for his bound broke on the land,
Roaring and rushing, and each flat and plain
Devoured.—Upon the mountains now were seen
Gaunt men, and women hungering with their babes,
Eying each other, or with marble looks
Measuring the space beneath swift-lessening.
At times a swimmer from some distant rock
Less high, came struggling with the waves, but sank
Back from the slippery soil. Pale mothers then
Wept without hope, and aged heads struck cold
By agues trembled like red autumn leaves ;
And infants moaned and young boys shrieked with fear.
Stout men grew white with famine. Beautiful girls
Whom once the day languished to look on, lay
On the wet earth and wrung their drenched hair ;
And fathers saw them there, dying, and stole
Their scanty fare, and while they perished thrived.

Then Terror died, and Grief, and proud Despair,
Rage and Remorse, infinite Agony,
Love in its thousand shapes, weak and sublime,
Birth-strangled ; and strong Passion perished.
The young, the old, weak, wise, the bad, the good
Fell on their faces, struck,—whilst over them
Washed the wild waters in their clamorous march.

Still fell the flooding rains. Great Ossa stood
Lone, like a peering Alp, when vapours shroud
Its sides, unshaken in the restless waves ;
But from the weltering deeps Pelion arose
And shook his piny forehead at the clouds,
Moaning, and crown'd Olympus all his snows
Lost from his hundred heads, and shrank aghast.
Day, Eve, Night, Morning came and passed away.
No Sun was known to rise and none to set :
'Stead of its glorious beams a sickly light
Paled the broad East what time the day is born :
At others a thick mass vaporious and black,
And firm like solid marble, roofed the sky ;
Yet gave no shelter.

—Still the ravenous wolf
Howled, and wild foxes and the household dog
Grown wild, upon the mountains fought and fed
Each on the other. The great Eagle still
In his home brooded, inaccessible,
Or, when the gloomy morning seemed to break,
Floated in silence o'er the shoreless seas.
Still the quick snake unclasped its glittering eyes,
Or shivering hung about the roots of pines ;
And still all round the vultures flew, and watched
The tumbling waters thick with bird and beast ;
Or, dashing in the midst their ravenous beaks,
Plundered the screaming billows of their dead.

Ne'er has such ruin been or such despair
Since, in records or tales of Thessaly.
Earth shook, great Mother, and from all her limbs
Sent signs of terror and unnatural pain :
The vallies trembled, and great lakes unlocked
Their dark foundations, and laid bare to day
Naiads with watery locks and elfish shapes,
Half sylvan, such as loved of old to haunt

On the fresh edge of forest-girded pools,
And shook the gladed echoes with their laugh.
Whole plains heaved up : meadows were torn and
turn'd

Downwards, and ancient oaks whose crooked feet
Were riveted in rocks were wrenched away
And bared to the wild blast and sullen rain.
Wonder grew plain as truth. Etna, far off—
Terrible Etna, spuming, cast abroad
Her blazing rivers with loud groaning sounds
That tore the amazed heart of Sicily :—
Such noise was never bred on the great shores
Where Orinoco, huge sea-creature, comes
Rolling his shining train, o'er rapids and gulphs
Descending swift, and for a thousand leagues
Ravages wood and wild, and mad at last
Dashes his watery scorn against the breast
That fed him :—She, fond ocean-mother, still
Receives him to deep calm within her arms.

Higher and higher fled the wasted throngs,
And still they hoped for life, and still they died,

One after one, some worn, some hunger-mad :
Here lay a giant's limbs sodden and shrunk,
And there an infant's, white like wax, and close
A matron with grey hairs, all dumb and dead :—
Meanwhile, upon the loftiest summit safe,
Deucalion laboured through the dusky day,
Completing as he might his floating raft,
And Pyrrha, sheltered in a cave, bewailed
Her child which perished.—

Still the ruin fell :

No pity, no relapse, no hope :—The world
Was vanishing like a dream. Lightning and Storm,
Thunder and deluging rain now vexed the air
To madness, and the riotous winds laughed out
Like Bacchanals, whose cups some God has charmed.
Beneath the headlong torrents towns and towers
Fell down, temples all stone, and brazen shrines ;
And piles of marble, palace and pyramid
(Kings' homes or towering graves) in a breath were
swept

Crumbling away. Masses of ground and trees
Uptorn and floating, hollow rocks brute-crammed,

Vast herds, and bleating flocks, reptiles, and beasts
Bellowing, and vainly with the choaking waves
Struggling, were hurried out,—but none returned :
All on the altar of the giant Sea
Offered, like twice ten thousand hecatombs,
Whose blood allays the burning wrath of Gods.
—Day after day the busy Death passed on
Full, and by night returned hungering anew ;
And still the new morn filled his horrid maw,
With flocks, and herds; a city, a tribe, a town,
One after one borne out, and far from land
Dying in whirlpools or the sullen deeps.
All perished then :—The last who lived was one
Who clung to life because a frail child lay
Upon her heart : weary, and gaunt, and worn,
From point to point she sped, with mangled feet,
Bearing for aye her little load of love :—
Both died,—last martyrs of another's sins,
Last children they of Earth's sad family.

Still fell the flooding rains. Still the Earth shrank :
And Ruin held his strait terrific way.

Fierce lightnings burnt the sky, and the loud thunder
(Beast of the fiery air) howled from his cloud,
Exulting, towards the storm-eclipsed moon.
Below, the Ocean rose boiling and black,
And flung its monstrous billows far and wide
Crumbling the mountain joints and summit hills;
Then its dark throat it bared and rocky tusks,
Where, with enormous waves on their broad backs,
The demons of the deep were raging loud;
And racked to hideous mirth or bitter scorn
Hissed the Sea-angels; and earth-buried broods
Of Giants in their chains tossed to and fro,
And the sea-lion and the whale were swung
Like atoms round and round.—

Mankind was dead :

And birds whose active wings once cut the air,
And beasts that spurned the waters,—all were dead :
And every reptile of the woods had died
Which crawled or stung, and every curling worm :—
The untamed tiger in his den, the mole
In his dark home—were choaked : the darting ounce,
And the blind adder and the stork fell down

Dead, and the stifled mammoth, a vast bulk,
Was washed far out amongst the populous foam :
And there the serpent, which few hours ago
Could crack the panther in his scaly arms,
Lay lifeless, like a weed, beside his prey.
And now, all o'er the deeps corpses were strewn,
Wide-floating millions, like the rubbish flung
Forth when a plague prevails ; the rest down-sucked,
Sank, buried in the world-destroying seas.—

Confusion raged and ruled. At last, up-grew
A mingling of Earth, Sea, and Heaven and Air ;
All one they looked, impenetrable, black
As Chaos, when the salient atoms flew
Around the abyss and made all space a Hell.
Nature lay drowned and dead. Fens, moors, and
bogs,
And pleasant vallies and aspiring hills,
Rivers and trees were lost, mountains and lakes :
Even Heaven eternal, whom no cloud before
Utterly barred, thro' its serene domain
Kept captive all the Gods and lucid stars,

Mercurius and Apollo and the rest ;
And hid their beauty from the fainting world.
—A mass like the great ocean when all winds
Blow and lay bare its hollows, and shake forth
The century-sleeping sands, until the foam
Grows thick and dark, rolled over sea and land,—
A perilous mass of floods, fierce as the North
In March, when scything blasts strip all the bones,
And loud as when the riven air proclaims
Earthquakes at Hecla, or once bright Peru.

—It is a task beyond the Muse,—and yet
Sometimes she writeth with a golden pen,—
Witness those tales breathing of Paradise
And all that sinful mirth of Circe's son,
And where the mightiest poet open lays
Red Pandæmonium to eternal view,
And numbereth out the Peers of Satan, all
Tossed on the fiery waters, and bewailing
Their frightful fall ; from Heaven's precipitous bounds
Cast like the refuse, to find out their way
Thro' depths and dark abysses, and the jar

Earlier than Order, till the mouths of Hell
Received them flaming,—a tremendous home.
It is a task beyond the Muse, too far,
To paint that leaden darkness which obscured
The world, or that wide horror which was born
When every element forsook its name
And nature, and all dumb and innocent things
Perished, because imperial man had erred.—
A dreariness there is which chills the heart,
When the sun dies on some ice-barren plain,
Cheerless and wintry-pale ; and when the wind
Waileth in loud December, calling ghosts
To feed the sight of credulous age ; and when
The hail-storm comes ; and when the great sea chafes,
And the wild horses of the Atlantic shake
Their sounding manes and dash the foam to Heaven.
These sights are vanquished by the painter's toil :
But when the intolerable flood prevailed,—
That watery massacre, which quite destroyed
Thessaly, man and woman, and children frail,
Birds, beasts, the very worm, the tree, the flower,
When nothing *was*—but ruin, and nought seen

But one monotonous dreary waste of waves
Tumbling in monstrous eddies, and a light
Like an eclipse complete when day is hid,
The painter's pencil and the poet's pen
Must fail, confounded at a scene so dire.—

* * * * *

ON a drear morning, ague-cold and dark,
Deucalion from the mountain's lonely top
Launched his frail raft, rich with its living freight
And laden full: Scarce light enough was seen
To show that quarter of the sky 'neath which
The green Parnassus (when that mount was green)
Held station; yet with hands which trembled not
He struck his piny oar against the soil
And floated on the waters.—

—So he left
The failing land, and then loud gusts uprose
Curling the billows with unnatural rage,
Till on the summit of the desert hill
They rushed, and in the Titan's sight tore up

The knarled oaks, washing and wasting all
The ruinous earth until no trace was seen.

“ Whither, ah ! whither—to what happier shore
Steer’st thou thy way, Deucalion ?” Pyrrha spoke.
He, glancing at the sky, just where the North
Is cut by the eastern light at early dawn,
(The mid-point of the compass) bade her gaze :

“ What see’st thou—nought ?—Poor girl, thine eye
is dim :

For hope still lives.—Come ! Bride of my despair,
(Now of my hope,) we’ll live or die together.
Along the desarts of the deep we’ll go,
Along the wide and wave-blown wilderness,
Undaunted and untiring. *Some* fair land
There is which Jove designs shall be our home :
Believe it. O Thessalian Pyrrha !—*Thou*,
Child of the ocean, canst thou fear its rage ?”—
So spoke he, smiling thro’ deep sorrow,—filled
With fear which yet he kept hid in his heart ;
And with prevailing looks and voice all love
Cheered the sad Pyrrha on her watery way.

—Morn passed, and noon, and eve along ; and night
Over their heads hung like a pall, through which
No minute star nor glimpse of faintest light
Could pierce ; but all was dark,—dark like the grave.

—And so they floated on their fated track,
Borne onwards till the o'erwhelming rains had ceased,
And the wild winds were sleeping : and around
No noise was heard, save from their beating hearts,
And the lone dashings of the endless seas.

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248 *Journal of Management Inquiry* 16(3)

14

TABLE 1

THE
FLOOD OF THESSALY.

PART THE SECOND.



THE
FLOOD OF THESSALY.

PART THE SECOND.

SOME have believed the Deluge never was :
And some that, ere it was, man walked the world
With a sight more near to immortality,
Than e'er hath shone since those diluvian days :
Others have guessed that monstrous tribes, now dead,
Blackened the air, once, or with ponderous bulks
Trod down the soil,—Phoenix and eastern Roc,
And Sphinx whose words perplex'd the wit of Thebes,
And Behemoth, vast birth, (almost a fable)
That fed like Famine on the streams and hills,—
A breathing wonder,—a strange truth, confirmed.
—To *me* the records of the days of old

Are starred with a diviner character.
Fable, historian page, or sager verse
I mar not nor reject ; nor now enquire,
Bent on a tale of ancient years, how far
The wonders of past times be false or true.

Whether the bright and rolling world came forth,
A thing of life, from Darkness or blind Chance,
Chaos or utter Nought ; or sprung from Air,
Fire or innumerable atoms, charmed
Into harmonious motion, or dependeth
On star or comet, is not now my care :
Nor whether in the earth's deep heart there hides
A mighty abyss of waters, casting out
From immemorial time, beautiful things
In its revolving. 'Tis enough for me
To gaze on its great regions,—boundless plains,
Continents, flourishing isles, and desarts rude,
Forests old as the world and falling floods,
And mountains, east and west, which kiss the moon,
Andes, and Himalayans, and bright Alps ;
And fiery Etna in her purple pride

Rising from meadows of a thousand hues.
Nor these alone transport me ; gentler sights
Are mine, deep groves and fountains and calm lakes,
And murmuring waters and lone silent shores,
The air, the golden sun, the visiting cloud
Which comes and goes ; Night and her crowds of stars
And that ne'er-sleeping wilderness of waves
The sea,—the populous sea, which circleth all,
And the wide arch of everlasting Heaven.

Free Nature in her bounty offereth these
To man, and hence I worship. I may dream
That the great earth unshapen, was indeed
First, co-eternal with the supreme God ;
Thus Plato taught : or by a single word
(Born like a thought, and smit with light and sound
At once) was called to wear this perfect form,
This dress of bluest air and sylvan shade :
Or with thy fables, old Pythagoras,
(Gathered in sandy Egypt, or derived
From bearded Magi in the Chaldee lands)
Cheat for awhile my soul :—But Truth will come,

And cloudless seasons and serener hours,
And then how vain it is I learn, to send
Among earth's secrets and confusions, forth
A thought unwing'd, to search and ask what was
The dread Beginning! Like a pilgrim worn
By toil and blinded on the burning sands,
The baffled Speculation home returns,
Drooping and glad to rest. Therefore no more :
O Muse ! no longer loiter in thy way ;
For thou, ere thou hast done thy toil, must scale
The empyrean with undrooping wings,
And look upon the bright haunts of the Gods.

High in that middle region, where, it seems,
Olympus and his hundred heads are lost
In air—(tho' clouds hang round and make the place
Holy, cerulean vapours rare and fine,)
'Tis storied Jove's Saturnian palace sprung.
—It was a mighty dome, whose blue arch shone
With a thousand constellated lights that rained
Rich, endless day, and gentlest warmth like spring
The present and the past were there,—the Signs

Scorpion and Cancer and Aquarius,
And all who belt the sky, and all the throng
That flame along the tropics, or like gems
Live in the foreheads of the hemispheres,
Sirius and Taurus and the starry twain,
(Leda's) and fierce Orion who, between
Phoenix and Hydra, on the nights of May
Shakes over southern seas his watery beams ;
And northwards shone Canopus, and the lights
Cassiopeia, and the great fix'd star
Arcturus, and Andromeda, long chained
And haunted on the cold and sea-beat rock
Others were there, since known. Below, withdrawn,
And seen as thro' a vista clear and wide,
Gleam'd squares and arches, streets, range after range,
Temples and towers and alabaster spires,
Which ran up to infinitude, and pierced
With sharp and glittering points the highest air,
And terraces crown'd with pavilions, which
Outshone the sun, and with their light made base
All that of old Nebuchadnezzar hung
Towering above his Babylonian halls,

Making great wonder dumb. Nearer, all round
 That lustrous dome colossal figures stood,
 Like pillars, with vast sinewy arms outspread,
 And golden shapes between, with finer care
 Wrought than e'er Phidias us'd, whose carved thoughts
 Threw beauty o'er the years of Pericles.

Typhon was there—(*his spirit*, the corpor'al mould
 Lay under Etna, crush'd,) and Atlas huge,
 Phorcys, and Briareus, tho' spared from toil,
 And prone Enceladus, whom Pluto trod
 Down with his chariot wheels, when thro' the heart
 Of groaning earth he wound his dusky way,*
 And raped Proserpina : and all the rest,
 Titans, and giants, and amphibious things,
 Whose hate grew strong when Saturn ceased his reign.
 Fixed on their pedestals of glowing gold
 (Figured with all the actions of the sky)
 They stood,—proud perfect works, and thro' their veins

* *Jamque per anfractus animarum rector opacos
 Sub terris querebat iter, gravibusque gementem
 Enceladum calcabat equis.*—CLAUD. *De raptu Proserpin.*

Transparent the ethereal fluids ran :
While in each space curtains of trembling mist
And azure-woven air came flowing down,
O'er-shower'd with stars,—between whose waving folds
The delicate Zephyrs with their odorous loads
Passed in and out, and girls, like Flora fair,
Sprinkled the veined floor with amaranth blooms.
—And there the laughing Hours flew round and round
In airy circles, while outspread below
The wood-nymphs lay and Fauns, whose haunts were now
Flooded, and at their head the sylvan Pan,
Married to Echo, who received his words
As wisdom, and to all the listening Earth
Told the deep secrets of his springs and caves.*
And Jupiter, eternal Spirit, was there,
Like a Divinity beyond the rest
Enthroned :—Apart, and as imperial kings
Sit reigning compassed by their pomp and arms,

* “Echo, the wife of Pan, is no other than *genuine Philosophy* which faithfully repeats his word, or only transcribes as *Nature dictates*, thus representing the true image and reflection of the world.”—*Lord Bacon, on Learning.*

So, amid clouds and amethystine fires,
He ruled ; not fierce as when thro' heaven he chased
Saturn, but milder than the first born Love.
And near him stood Apollo,—Cybele,
Juno, and zoned Aphrodité crown'd
With flowering myrtles, and the palest maid
Of heaven,—Diana ; and bright numbers more.

Suddenly—(for till then whispers had been,
And smiles prevailing and melodious tones,
And Eolus in distance far was heard
Sounding his trumpet over lands and seas)
Silence came forth :—The circling Hours then ceased
Their round, and from Jove's throne a silver light
Flowed to the zenith, mild as what is seen
At morning, when the westering stars are gone,
And young Apollo still delays the day.
Every bright eye was filled, and quickly turned
Its radiance towards the supreme king, who raised
His head and shook his cloudy hair aside,
Smiling in beauty throughout heaven.—'Twas then
The Gods rejoiced, and knew the world was saved.

THE WORLD IS SAVED,—Millions of spirits sang
All around the skiey halls—*The World is saved ;
From Deluge ; from the immeasurable wrath
Of Jove ; from Desolation ; from Decay !*
They sang, and all the murmuring Zephyrs shook
From off their wings harmonious airs, and sounds
Came streaming from immortal instruments,
All heaven attun'd, and as by Muses' hands
Touched in diviner moments, when the choir
Of Phœbus, from long listening to his lyre,
Are equalled for a space with mightiest Gods.
Even he himself, the Lord of light and song,
For once descending from his sublime state,
Swept in the madness of the hour, such chords
As stung to ravishment and finer joy
Gods, and all else :—The constellations flashed
And trembled : the fierce Giants lost their frown ;
And the Fauns shrieked, while thro' Olympian
veins
Like light, the quick nectarean spirit flew,
Till each stood forth betrayed—a brighter God,
Startled at his full-shewn Divinity.

The World is saved ; from Deluge ; from Decay !
Still sounded thro' the vast Saturnian halls,
Like echoes which the mountains multiply
From rock to rock, sending their cries abroad
O'er barren moors and the dumb solitudes,
And thro' the watery dells and hollow caves,
Which, shaking off the ancient silence, give
Great answer, in their own fantastic voice
Familiar to the listening air alone.
Still the words sounded: Still '*The World is saved !*'
Rang all around ; but as the echoes died,
Fainter,—and fainter still with every cry,
The vision of the Gods which lately filled
The circuit of Olympus with its light,
Receded:—The great Juno shrank, eclipsed,
And Venus lost her smile, and Dian waned :
Ceres had fled, and Mars ; and Phœbus now
Shook softer lustre from his dewy hair ;
And Jupiter, the greatest and the last
Of all to lose his brightness, in a cloud
Shrouded the light of his Elysian eyes,
And seemed to fade away. One after one

Departed :—Whither? Oh ! enquire no more ;
No more the Muse may tell who saw that sight
Thousands of years ago. Whether there be
An inner conclave or diviner seat
Removed, or if the embracing elements
Then each received its own peculiar God,
Who lost his incarnation, or put off
A shape which was his limit,—ask no more.
All that is told is this—They vanished,—all,
Statues and pillars and cerulean domes
Vanished, and lustrous stars and crowned Gods,
And Giants shrank to dissolution, like
The watery pageant which the morning sun
Breeds on Sicilian shores, and buildeth up
Tow'r and vain column and Palladian arch,
And capital, upon the alarmed floods :
Or such as travellers note at break of day
On Pambamarca, where the shapes of men
Stand forth like ghosts, and vanish. So the
Gods,
Great visions ! through the wide empyrean fled,
And faded,—wasting all to azure air.

Yet, ere they vanished, two bright creatures left
The skies, commissioned to declare by signs
The will of Jove to man,—wingfooted, light,
And young, Caducean Mercury, who like
A diver plunging from some rocky height,
Flung himself headlong from the chrystal walls
Of Heaven, and thro' the airy wilderness
Shot like a star; and with him streaming went
Iris, arrayed in all her many hues,
With power to spread or hide her coloured wings,
And amid sunshine or in rain throw out
Her storm-dissolving bow, and check the floods.
Over the water-covered hills they flew,
Which once looked fair in Greece,—over the tops
Of Athos and the mountain-peaks that stand
Close by the Bosphorus, whose quickening stream
Was drowned and lost, and he no longer rushed
Forth as of old, to clasp his shrinking bride,
The pale Propontic, in his foaming arms.

All was wide waste and water. Far and near
The skiey twain (like as two planets spin

Round in their orbits, yet with gentler speed)
Circled, and still descended, and delayed,
Hovering attentive as each floating wreck
Passed onwards, by the currents charmed along :
At last, not far from where Parnassus lies,
They saw, contending with the awaken'd wind,
And tossed, and worn, and struggling with the streams,
A little raft, whereon two creatures lay,
Wreck of the world. The man, with haggard eyes
And sinews loosen'd by unnatural toil,
Strove yet to cherish his companion pale,
And with high tender courage, such as springs
From fountains only where the heart is pure,
Soothed her and spoke, and with his arm around
Her fainting figure, seemed to ward away
Evils, both watery perils and despair.
“ Art thou so weary, Pyrrha ?” in soft voice
Deucalion spake—“ so weary, so forlorn ?”
“ Pity me, my sweet husband ; thou art brave,
But I am weaker than an infant's sigh.*

* “ But I am weaker than a woman's tear.”—*Tro. and Cressid.*

Oh ! I have weighed thee down : Alone thou might'st
Have held great war with Fate ; but I have been
Thy ruin."—" Dear perdition !" he returned,
" Not golden Fortune on her turning wheel
Was so to be desired as thou by me :
Oh ! thou art fairer than all fortune.—Love !
Pyrrha ! Thou tenderest creature ever born,
Cheer thee :—Behold, day breaks at last, and hark !
How all the music of the morning comes."
He spoke and smiled,—When, like a curtain torn
Suddenly from the East, the parted glooms
Withdrew, South, West and to the howling North :—
Thus dæmons driven from some holy shrine,
By incantations, or a God's bright frown,
Forsake the temple, and with desperate shrieks
Cast them upon the wild and boundless winds.
The storm grew silent ; and the thunder spake
No more ; but in their place visions arose,
Meteors and floating lights and glancing stars,
And splendours running to and fro, amidst
Heaps of dissolving cloud, trembling, confus'd.
But joy is slow-believed, where grief hath lived

Long a familiar : so despair still sate
And sorrow on the downcast Pyrrha's eyes.

At last, she look'd—and lo ! the East grew pale
With morning, and then flushing (like some bride
Whose ear expects yet fears each distant tread
To seek her chamber when the feast is done)
Threw out its fiery colours, and became
Crimson and burning red. Apollo's steeds,
Which wait his coming at the eastern gate,
Harness'd were there, and champ'd their chrystal bits,
And threw their flaming foam upon the air.
Then first, in all its radiant beauty shone
The Rainbow, shadowy arch, of every hue
Of light inwove, in Heaven's immortal loom ;
Gay, rich, illustrious colours mingled there,
And shone and were involved each within each,
Atoms of loveliest light, orange and blue,
Yellow and glowing red and soothing green ;
Lying across the sky, but vanishing
As the clear day came on, the arch was seen.
Over Parnassus far the vision hung ;

And thither, borne along by tide or swell
Glided the raft, until a sound like waves
Breaking on some rough strand alarmed the air.
Then Pyrrha trembled, and Deucalion knew
Peril was near, and from his face the smile
Faded, and lowering care his eyes o'erspread.
No word he uttered, but with straining arms
Toiled,—but in vain : the loud and hurrying stream
Forced them along, till thro' the whitening waves
The horrid rocks peered up as black as death ;
And the hoarse pebbles rattled on the strand
A stormy welcome ; and the winds blew loud ;
And the sea rose and sank, and round the raft
Curled with a hungry noise, 'till one huge wave
Dashed them along the shore.—

There wreck'd they lay ;

The woman in her husband's guardian arms,
(Clasped like a jewel in its sterner case,)
But lost to life, and dumb, and motionless :
And then that husband, faithful to the grave,
Strung once more his worn nerves, and with deep sobs,
And staggering steps, and sighs, bore her beyond

The tyranny of the seas. “Roar on,” he said—
“The treasure of the world is saved at last.”
So, pressing those cold lips, her head he raised
Upon his knee:—‘She will revive’—he sighed,
And fell, half-swooning; and sleep, long-delayed,
Came like a cloud and wrapped his limbs in rest.

There, on the strand they lay,—Deucalion,
Father of this fam’d world, progenitor,
And Pyrrha the sad mother, goddess-born;
Both wreck’d, tho’ saved, because their brothers did
Antediluvian sins,—because the wrath
Of the high God, great Jove, lay on the earth,
And was not to be quenched, unless by blood.
There lay they, long-time sleeping; while a Sea—
To which the Atlantic with its waste of waves
Is poor, tho’ from its warring depths it flung
Alarums to the moon, and that broad belt
Of waters where the Baltic storms are bred
Is nought, nor where the Arabian snake is seen
Wasting the Nubian coast—A boundless Sea,
Paved like the dreamer’s brain with livid looks,

Rolled far and near, and shook its hideous loads
At Heaven ; and ever, as the billows bared
Their mountain backs and sank, worn with the toil,
Howled to the dreaming winds, and the winds sent
Fierce answers back and dashed the waves to snow.—
So, ere it slumbered in entire repose,
Antick'd the Ocean : then, by great degrees
Descending from its cloudy strife, tamed down
The plunging billows and impetuous depths,
Roaring for prey.—And now great Heaven had shut
Her windows, and the fountains of the world
Damm'd with a word ;—and gentle calm came down,
And a power arose, which to the earth's deep heart
Sucked the vast floods, till vales and hills appeared.

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—Recovered from their trance, and so refreshed
As the tired spirit is by food and sleep,
The wanderers looked around. On one fair side
Rose hills, and gentle waters murmured near,
And vernal meadows where the wild rose blew

Spread their fresh carpets. In the midst upsprung
A mountain, whose green head some ancient storm
Had struck in twain : rich forests deck'd its heights,
And laurel wildernesses clothed the sides,
And round it flew harmonious winds, whose wings
Bore inspiration and the sound of song.

Lower, and in the shade of that great hill,
A temple lay ; untouched by storm or flood
It seemed, and white as when, just hewn, it caught
Ionian beauty from the carver's skill.

Thither they went, perhaps by some strong star
Drawn, or the spirit of the place unseen,
To ask their doom or own the ruling God :—
Thither they went, first parents, whom no child
Solaced, yet with hearts lighter than of yore ;
The woman paler than when first she flung
Her curling arms around Deucalion's neck,
And he more gravely beautiful, less young,
But nearer heaven and like a dream of Jove.

They entered.—On a marble pedestal
A veiled figure sate, sybil or sage,

Or breathing oracle, whose inspired words
Were fate—immutable like Death or Love.*
And near her, from an altar, whose soft flame
Was cedar-fed, fumed spice and frankincense,
Sandal-wood, aloes, and Arabian gums,
Warm odours yielding like the suns of May
When blooms are starting, and the fresh green grass
Laughs thro' its April tears and hums with life.
They knelt, the rough stones kissing, and with fear
Prayed; and each took bright leaves of the rich bay
There lying, and with low imploring sounds
Cast them upon the flame:—And then uprose
That figure, which was Justice, and the Queen
Of prophecy, and mother of the Hours,
Daughter of Earth and Heaven, and bride of Jove,
Great THEMIS. She, unveiling her bright eyes
And brow pale as the marble, with a voice
Sounding from awful distance, slowly spoke.
'Children of Dust!' she said, 'Hear and revive:
The wrath of Heaven has passed, and ye are saved.

* ——— 'Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds.'—*Shakespeare*.

Go from my temple, and with garments loosed*
 And faces hidden, your great parent's bones
 Gather, and cast them o'er your backs.'—They stood
 Mute with amaze: each to the other looked
 For help, bewildered; and when sense came back
 The altar and the goddess were no more.
 'Themis immortal! O return, return!
 Hear us, O vanish'd Themis!' (so they moaned)
 'Hear us, and shed thy lustre on our minds,
 Now dark. We see not, and are very sad.
 We have endured much fortune, and, though spared,
 We are alone:—no kin, no friends are ours,
 None,—no companions save the senseless stones.'
 The stones!—'Twas then the riddle of the skies
 Dissolved. They left that temple, and obeyed
 Its queen and prophetess:—Deucalion first
 Plucking from out the earth (which sighed) a stone,

- * Discedite templo;
 Et velate caput; cinctasque resolvite vestes;
 Ossaque post tergum magnæ jactate parentis.

Ovid Metam.

Threw it against the wind : It fell,—and lo !
Slowly as when the moon unclouds her face,
Swelled and grew human ; yet not man at once,
But leaving like the worm its outer scale,
And shooting, as the flower puts forth its leaves,
Flexible arms (yet firm,) limbs apt for strength,
Muscles and sinuous shape, and streaming veins,
And last—the crowning head ; which (cold at first,
And stiff like some pale mask,) relaxed to life,
Unclosing its bright eyes, and in warm cheeks
Receiving the first blush of living youth.
O wonder ! Happiest Pyrrha, with what speed
She cast a stone, which like the first up-grew,
Yet fairer,—female, with such waving form
As Circe or Calypso, free from harm ;—
Slowly the change went on, from limb to limb,
From waist to bosom, swelling like a cloud,
White-turning neck, and then the awakening face,
And last the eyes unclosed. ‘ Immortal Heaven !’—
The mother spoke, and for a moment stood
Dumb, and with arms outspread then flew along
And clasped the new-born vision in her arms.

There hung she, and so gazed as mothers do
Who clasp pale children gathered from the grave,
And saved when hope had perished. 'Oh!' she spoke,
In low and hurrying tones, 'Oh! leave me not
Again; Ione!—my sole child!—and yet
Art thou indeed, with all this skiey grace,
Mine own, made perfect without aid of time?
Thou stranger on the earth! Heaven's child (and mine)—
Oh! vision, die not until Pyrrha dies.'

Thus, to her child restored, the mother spoke;
Thus for awhile, yet not her toil forsook:
But still, obeying their great oracle,
Those early parents cast on high the stones,
And ever where they cast the fragments rose
Men, strong and young, or women beautiful,—
Born by some great enchantment, such as lifts
The earth from darkness or dissolves the moon,
Or clothes the proud sun in eclipse.

—At last,
Wearied with toil and new emotion, both
Retired, and in a cave o'er which the rose

Shook his immortal blooms, and lilies near,
Jasmine and musk, daisies and hyacinth,
And violets, a blue profusion, sprang
Haunting the air, they lay them down and slept.
And with soft sleep came dreams, a glittering brood,
Its progeny, like stars from darkness bred :
And Themis, so it seemed, before them stood,
A tow'r-crowned goddess,—a Saturnian shape,
Whose forehead mocked the clouds, which round about
In throngs came fawning, like aërial slaves ;
While she, outstretching her right hand, and pale
With power call'd upwards from prophetic depths,
(Which like a passion shakes immortal frames)
Spoke to the Future,—a strange language, born
Of Time and Nature, then not understood.
And then she touched Deucalion's brow ; unsealing
With her cold finger, cold as winter ice,
The Promethean's sight,—while still he slept.

In a moment straight before his eyes there thronged
Visions,—vast moving sights, Ocean and Land,
Palaces, towns, and temples,—sea-girt isles

Floating, and navies of a thousand ships,
Armies of steeled men, and shapes that wore
Their panther spoils, (nought else)—fierce savages,
Rivers and desert wastes, and grassy slopes
Crowned with the branching palm, and cedars such
As stood on Lebanon and kissed the wind
At morning,—and strange scenes and shapes beside.
—For a time he looked bewildered; but at last
His eye accustomed saw each shape distinct.—
First, on rich moving thrones, sceptred and crown'd
With oriental gold, dazzling as day,
And studded o'er with gems, passed slowly along
The kings of Thebes, and ocean-girded Tyre,
And Memphis old, and shrunken Babylon,—
Huge warrior men, upon whose lips, tho' sad,
Hung scorn, and pride in every wrinkled front.
Then came a bearded king more mild than they,
Father of many sons, all fair and brave,
And daughters, one a prophetess: This was
The Trojan Priam, at whose city gates
The Grecians watched for ten long bloody years,
And entered at the last old Ilium.

Near him sate one with laurels crown'd, but blind,
Who, pausing for a time, spoke forth at last
With a voice more solemn than the trumpet's tone
Calling armed men to battle : Terrible strife
In which the Gods once mingled filled his song,
Until descending unto gentler tones,
A gentler chord he pressed, and Love was made
His theme,—how on the Asian sands a dame
Loitered with him she loved and left her lord,
(Lacedemonian Helen)—how she stole
From Sparta then the sightless poet sung,
With the boy Paris, Priam's shepherd son,
And how Achilles angered, and the prince
Of barren Ithaca was led astray,
For ten long wretched years o'er land and wave
Wandering in grief and could not reach his home.

Following, and as the Magi walk, came two,
Hermes and Zoroaster, deemed sun-born,
Wise as the ever-watching stars, grave, pale,
And shrouded round by superstitious breath,
Which bade believe that each one was a God,

No less, and could dispense empire and death,
Riches, large joy, and charms from every ill.
These passed ; when, like some picture where each
shape

Looks so o'er-mastered that life stirs in all,
ATHENS from out a circular cloud up-sprang
Bravely, and shewed her temples all and streets,
Thro' which proud glorious men walked—one by one,
Else in bright throngs, as ages brought them forth
With exultation and no painful throes :
Kings, princes, and the soldiers of all states
(Not Athens alone, but Thebes and Macedon,
Corinth and Sparta and the rest) were seen
Conspicuous in their shining steel, but most
Great poets and grave-eyed philosophers
Shone thro' the dream like stars, and lit the land
With beauty and truth ; for well sage Themis knew
Virtue is first and knowledge before arms,
Or power, or wealth, or strength in battle shewn.
—Cadmus, of that immortal throng the head
And leader, (for we pass all meaner tribes)
Stood with those wondrous letters in his hand

By which bright thought was in its quick flight stopped,
And saved from perishing. Amphion next
Came with his lute, and Linus fiercely slain,
And Orpheus, Thracian shepherd, who made stay
Swift rivers in their flow, until too cold
The lewd Bacchantes down the Hebrus' stream
Rolled his dissevered head, which uttered still
'Eurydice !'—and then Alcæus passed,
Thales, and Sappho, whose so passionate song
Failed, tho' all fire, to stir the senseless boy
Phaon, and so the amorous Lesbian died.

Next came the Macedonian who bestrode
Bucephalus (whose spirit, till then untamed,
He broke by turning to the blinding sun)—
Yet not alone in steeds or in fierce arms
Delighted he, but much he loved rich song,
And fed his mind upon the tales of Troy :—
Then Plato, musing, whose most great delight
Was wisdom, which he taught by streams and groves,
Making Ilissus and its banks renowned ;
And Socrates, whose earnest aim was truth,

And the star-blinded sage Pythagoras ;
Praxiteles, and Phidias, and the rest
Whose Promethean touch awaken'd life
In the cold marble ; and that king who died
Self-martyr'd in thy strait Thermopylæ !
And he who taught retreat o'er woods and plains
So well, and desarts strange, and hostile shores ;
And Archimedes whose fierce art brought down
Ruin on cities ; and that tragic Three,
Athenians, who the dream of life unveiled,
Winning men's wondering hearts by speech and verse,
And gave this world its best philosophy :—
Then passed Demosthenes ; and he whom Fame
Slanders, sage Epicurus, on whom leaned
A youth well fitted for aught wise or good,—
Valiant, but wanton Lais bound him down
By amorous magic and enchanted toils ;
And Pericles then, and then Aspasia came,
Whose midnight study by some eastern lamp
Had paled her cheek, but filled her eyes with thought.

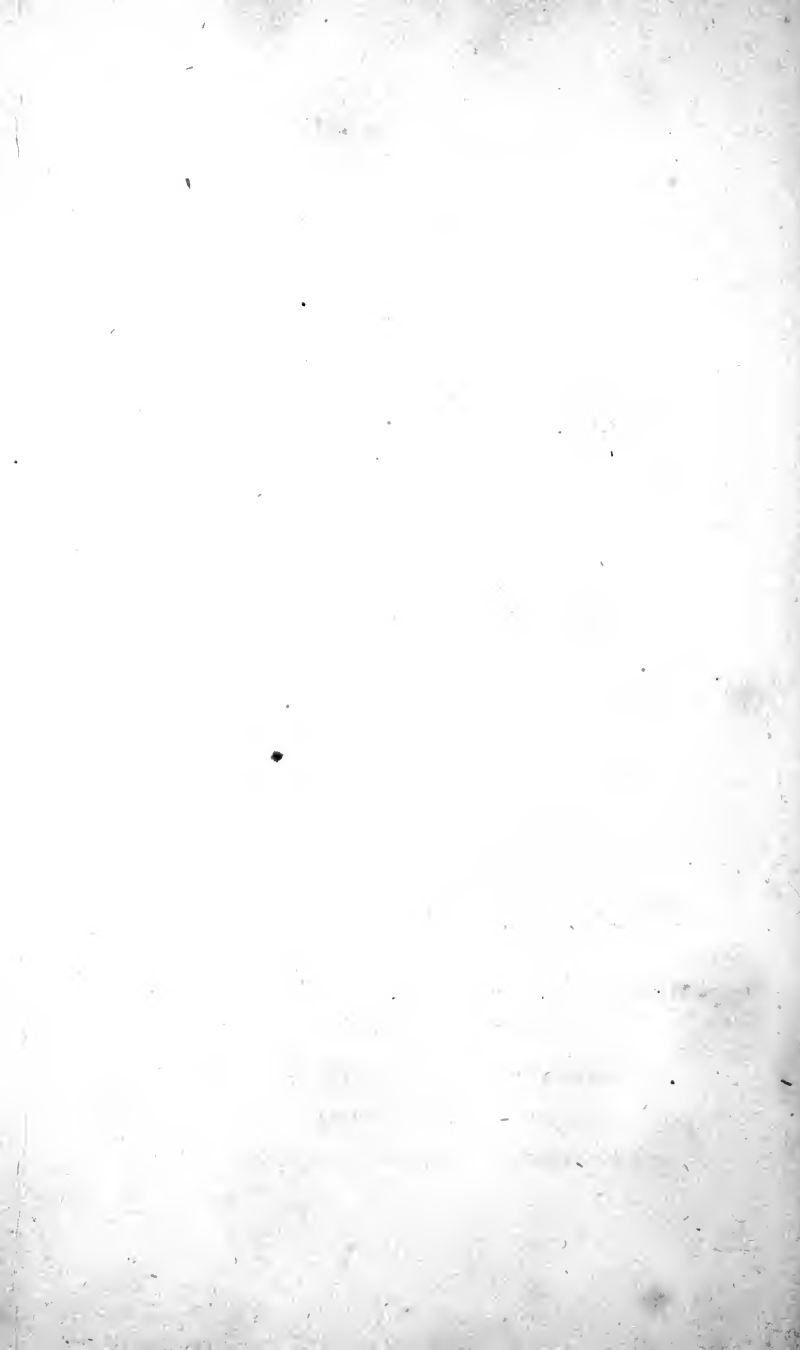
Then followed countless endless throngs, like leaves

Crowning a woody wilderness,—unnamed,
Unknown, save some, on whom chance or the time
Fell with redoubled light and made distinct ;—
Crowd after crowd,—enormous living trains,
Men, women, of every shape, and age, and mind
(Bright generations) passed along, some robed
Like seers, but most with spear or helmet armed,
Or in equestrian state, as still we see
Graven on gems or marble, and some wreathed
With Delphian laurel like Diana's maids,
Or roses Cytherean ; some with bays
Apollo's gift and some the gift of Mars.—
Beyond all piercing of the sight they reached
Into the future, like a prophet's thought ;
And still they passed, and still no end was seen, —
Heroes, and sages, and fair shapes unborn,
Vast towns and towers, temples and aqueducts,
Pillar and arch and trophy, all were seen ;
And Bacchanalian mirth like that which stunned
Persepolis, when Philip's son, grown mad,
Fired the great city,—around which came sounding
Battles and triumphs, and the rage of war,

The rout, the riot, and the cloud of arms,
The conquest, and captivity,—and death.
Such throngs of old were never known to stream
From Babylon or Susa, nor when last
The Assyrian met the Mede, and marked the bounds
Of empire by the gates of Nineveh ;
Nor when old Rome was highest ; nor when more late
The Scythian through the Indian valleys broad
Swept like a storm.— — —
All that has been, and is, and is to come
Was there, made plain,—writ down clear as the stars ;
A grand Array, beyond all which the grave
Could shew, though from its populous arms it threw
The treasures of past time, great, wise, and good,—
Beyond all thought, all guess or large belief,—
Beyond Imagination's widest dreams.— —
—These things, so Themis bade, assumed brief life :—
But whither they fled, or when the Titan shook
That rich sleep off, and in the awakening light
Bathed his flushed forehead, still remains unsung
In story ;—yet, before his sight, 'tis told,
Stood Pyrrha, fairest of earth's visions still,
Who on his tranced slumber long had looked,

Whispering the Gods for comfort. He awoke:—
And o'er him, gently bending, children hung,
(He their creator) and a new-born world
Opened upon his sense,—a Paradise
Of flowers and fruits, sweet winds and cloudless skies,
And azure waters winding to the main,
And forest walks, and (far off) sounds which break
The sun-set silence, and the songs of birds
Chanting melodious mirth:—Vernal delights
Haunted the air, and youth which knew no pang
Ran through all living veins, and touched all eyes
With beauty:—the tall branches waved their plumes;
The water trembled; and the amorous sun
Came darting from his orb: Eagles and doves,
Paired in the ether, and the branching stag
Fled from his shadow on the grass-green plain.—
O golden hours! O world! now stained with crime,
Immaculate then, methinks thy perfect fame
Should live in song! Methinks some bard, whose heart
Traces its courage to Promethean veins,
Should build in lasting verse, firmer than mine,
Deucalion's story,—(upon Delphi's steep
Saved from the watery waste,) and Pyrrha's woe.

THE
GIRL OF PROVENCE.



THE following passage (which occurs in "Collinson's Essay on Lunacy") suggested the poem of the "Girl of Provence." The reader will perceive, however, that it forms the material of only the concluding stanzas.

"The enthusiasm of a Girl from Provence had lately occupied my mind. It was a singular occurrence which I shall never forget. I was present at the national Museum when this Girl entered the Salle d' Apollon: she was tall, and elegantly formed, and in all the bloom of health. I was struck with her air, and my eyes involuntarily followed her steps. I saw her start as she cast her eyes on the statue of Apollo, and she stood before it as if struck with lightning, her eyes gradually sparkling with sensibility. She had before looked calmly around the Hall; but her whole frame seemed to be then electrified as if a transformation had taken place within her; and it has since appeared, that a transformation had taken place, and that her youthful breast had imbibed a powerful, alas! fatal passion. I remarked, that her companion (an elder sister it seems) could not force her to leave the statue, but with much entreaty, and she left the Hall with tears in her eyes, and all the expressions of tender sorrow. I set out the very same evening for Moutmorency. I returned to Paris at the end of

August, and visited immediately the magnificent collection of antiques. I recollected the Girl from Provence, and thought perhaps I might meet with her again; but I never saw her afterwards, though I went frequently. At length I met with one of the attendants, who, I recollected, had observed her with the same attentive curiosity which I had felt; and I enquired after her. 'Poor Girl!' said the old man, 'that was a sad visit for her. She came afterwards every day to look at the statue, and she would sit still, with her hands folded in her lap, staring at the image, and when her friends forced her away, it was always with tears that she left the Hall. In the middle of May she brought, whenever she came, a basket of flowers and placed it on the Mosaic steps. One morning early she contrived to get into the room before the usual hour of opening it, and we found her within the grate, sitting within the steps almost fainting, exhausted with weeping. The whole Hall was scented with the perfume of flowers, and she had elegantly thrown over the statue a large veil of India muslin, with a golden fringe. We pitied the deplorable condition of the lovely-girl, and let no one into the Hall until her friends came and carried her home. She struggled and resisted exceedingly when forced away; and declared in her frenzy that the god had that night chosen her to be his priestess, and that she must serve him. We have never seen her since, but have heard that an opiate was given her, and she was taken into the country!' I made further enquiries concerning her history, and learned that she died raving."—

Related by Madame de Haster, a German lady.

THE
GIRL OF PROVENCE.

——— A dream of Love
Shaped by some solitary nymph, whose breast
Longed for a deathless lover from above.

Lord. Byron.—Ch. Harold.

I.

IF there be aught within thy pleasant land,
Fair France, which to the poet help may be—
If thou art haunted by a Muse,—command
That now she cast her precious spell on me :
Bid that the verse I write be fair and free ;
So may I, an untravelled stranger, sing
Like one who drinketh of Apollo's spring.

II.

For,—tho' I never beneath eastern suns
Wandered, nor by Parnassus hill so high,
Nor where in beauty that bright fountain runs
Struck by the winged horse that scaled the sky,
Nor ever in the meads of Arcady,
In flowery Enna, or Thessalian shade,
Heard sweet the pastoral pipe at evening played,—

III.

Yet have I chosen, from the throngs of tale
Which crowded on me in life's dreaming hours,
One—sad indeed, but such as may not fail
To attest the peerless king's undying powers,
Who, like a light amongst Elysian bowers
Still moveth, while the sun (his empty throne)
Floats onwards, in its weary round, alone.

IV.

Ages and years have been and passed away,
And Mirth with light and Hope with rain-bow wings
Have flown, and Grief borne slow on pinions gray,

Since thou wast worshipp'd at the Delphian springs,
Whereby no longer now a poet sings :
Yet hast thou been, O Phœbus ! well repaid
By the deep love of one Provençal maid.

V.

Come !—with thy raven tresses loosely hung,
Thou nymph translated to the skies ! Breathe ! Sigh !
Let thy dark odorous hair be round me flung
And twined (rich inspiration !) till I die
For love of thee—a shadow ; so may I,
Stung to ethereal life, declare thy pain :—
Till then, whate'er I sing—I sing in vain.

VI.

Eva !—pale rose of Provence ! where art thou ?
Thy harp is silent,—gone, thy home forlorn :
Mute anguish lieth on thy sister's brow :
Thy father's eye, (once proud and like a morn
Of sparkling June) is emptied of its scorn :—
Ah ! bid me (and thou aid) in gentle verse
And words fair as thyself, thy tale rehearse.

VII.

In France—in sunny France, the fields are gay ;
Earth's fruits are richest there, and ripen soon :
The shrill lark welcometh a brighter day,
And, free and sheltered from the fiery noon,
The summer-sweet *Acanthis* sings her tune ;
Or in the glassy waters looketh long,
Until the nightingale begins her song.

VIII.

O Provence ! in thy groves and vine-hung bowers
Doth *still* that creature pine—that little bird
Who weeps her very soul away in showers
Of music,—only at the nightfall heard,
Yet sweeter far than any human word ?
Still doth it pine ?—or are the rose and thou
Deserted for some happier region now ?

IX.

Once, how it used to fill the fragrant air
With melancholy sounds that touched the brain !
But that was when pale Eva bound her hair

With flowers, that blushing into bloom again
Alarmed the bird to most melodious pain.
Those days are gone.—Oh! is the twilight pale
Made amorous *still* by the lone nightingale?—

X.

Fair Eva was De Varenne's gentle child,
Most gentle, from a rugged sire descended,
As April springeth from the winter wild,
A thing of rain and light gracefully blended,
Weeping inheritor! whose life is ended
Almost before the trump of March is dumb;
Dying in showers ere green Spring hath come.

XI.

Scarce eighteen summers by the Durance' side,
Which freshens the Provençal vallies green
With its bright waters, did that maid abide,
Beheld by few, yet loved as soon as seen,
And ripening as her mother once had been,—
Scarce eighteen summers, ere a sorrow strange
Fell from the sky, and wrought mysterious change.

XII.

How gracefully she lived can many tell ;
How meekly too she bore her father's frown ;
Though seldom on his patient child it fell,
And quickly then she smiled and soothed it down,
Or else would in harmonious measures drown
His wrath, (as water quells the angry flame)
Till Love returned, or slow Oblivion came.

XIII.

Two children,—Eva and young Heloise,
Were all that fortune to De Varenne gave,
When from his wars beyond the Pyrenees
He came to mourn upon Aurelia's grave.
Oh ! why should sorrow weep and never save !
She died, sad mother, and her husband wept
When closer to his heart her children crept.

XIV.

For once he wept ; but quickly from his eye
The fire that flashed therein dried up the tear,
And he assumed again that conduct high

Which bred a duteous love, not freed of fear,
Hallowing the lives of those his daughters dear :
Better perhaps if Love alone had dwelt
Within, and awed their young hearts while they knelt.

XV.

For her who bore them, when she drooped and died,
Exceeding sorrow did those children feel,
And oft they wished to slumber by her side,
And to her ear their pretty griefs reveal ;
At last a delicate bloom began to steal
Over their cheeks, and beauty waved and spread
About them, and with grace their every motion fed.

XVI.

In Heloise a blither glance was seen,
A firmer step, a brighter, darker eye ;
Her words were clear, like sounds that run between
The forest branches when some brook is nigh ;
And scorn sat smiling on her forehead high.
“ Thou art De Varenne’s girl,” the father said :
“ And Eva ?”—sighed that child, and hung her head.

XVII.

“Eva! thy sister thou resemblest not;
She cheers my soul, and is ashamed to pine:
Her grief has died; why is not thine forgot?
Thou art thy mother’s all, and she is mine.
My peerless child, I kiss thee,—my divine!
What a clear beauty laughs through her disdain!
My joy!” he said, and kissed his child again.

XVIII.

And so—(one favoured, and the other worn
By harsh neglect, and care before its time,)
Fled on life’s early hours, until its morn:
Then gleamed the eyes of one sad and sublime,
And in the other’s laughed a sunnier clime,
A paradise of beauty bright and young,
And over all a heaven of love was flung.

XIX.

Oh! radiant creature, fairer than the sun,
How dim was she beside thee,—how dismayed!
Thou like the east where dancing splendours run,

She like the quivering alder's deepest shade ;
Yet peerless in your wild-wood leaves arrayed
Were both,—sweet children of the sylvan hours,
Subjects of Love, who dies in courts and costly bowers.

XX.

In courts, where revel reigns, and passionate song
Floats like a triumph on the Bacchant's breath,
Ah ! what hath love to do,—unless prolong
Its rare existence to a lingering death ?
And die it must in war, the soldier saith ;
Its voice is shivered by the trumpet's tone :
It sees the fiery fight,—and lo ! 'tis flown.

XXI.

It hath no home upon the weltering seas ;
Or if it hideth there, on bitter food
It feeds, lone, trembling at each idle breeze,
Until 'tis blasted by the battle rude,
A gentle thing with gentle strength endued,
By 'absence kill'd,—by scorn ;—as often slain.
By poisonous pleasure as the sting of pain.

XXII.

Fair Love!—Beside the fountains and bright fields,
By running waters and in mossy glades,
(Tasting whatever the green quiet yields)
He roams, from morning till the evening shades
Fall, and the world like a phantasma fades :
There roams he, like a Sylvan, whom the air
Worships,—unwing'd, and making all his care.

XXIII.

There, night and day are his. The radiant sky
Is doubly beautiful, and sun, and shower,
And rainbows which upon the mountains lie,
And twice its common odour hath the flower,
And doubly filled with joy is every hour ;
And music hangeth on the winds and floods,
And lingereth in the caves and desert woods :

XXIV.

And in the populous forests thick with life,
Which (deep and cool as Faunus ever knew)
Are haunted only by melodious strife,

Of birds or insects, when the year is new
Feeding upon the fragrant summer dew :
And there the untiring seasons bring, for aye,
To night rich slumber, and fresh life to day.

XXV.

And Beauty, in her own eternal form,
(The same that witch'd the Dardan shepherd young)
Abideth.—Art doth never there deform
The amaranthine hues which life hath flung
O'er lips and cheeks to crimson blushes stung ;
But free as is the elemental air
Nature and Beauty live,—and both are fair.

XXVI.

And both might in De Varenne's home be seen,
For there his daughters wore the early day,
The one entranced by some high perilous scene,
The other, fonder of a gentler lay,
Read how the Gods from their celestial way
Would wander for the Naiads' loves, or take
An earthly form,—and all for Beauty's sake.

XXVII.

She read how Jove from out the gates of light
Came downwards, shining like a mist of gold,
And how fond Semele became star-bright,
And Anaxareté a statue cold,
Prisoned, tho' dead, within her mortal mould :
She read of eyes made lovelier than the morn
Through love, and blinded by excess of scorn.

XXVIII.

And so her gentle spirit, fed by time
With radiant fable, from its earth up-grew,
(As mountain clouds float, erring but sublime,
Thro' the blue air) and hung on visions new,
Like wing'd Imagination false yet true :
And that imperial passion that doth reign
O'er every nerve, grew bright within her brain.—

XXIX.

—How beautiful is morning, when the streams
Of light come running up the eastern skies !
How beautiful is life, in those young dreams.

Of joy, and faith,—of love that never flies,
Chained like the soul to truth ;—but ah ! it *dies*
Sometimes, and sometimes, with the adder's spite
Stings the true heart that nursed it, day and night.

XXX.

And beautiful is great Apollo's page :
But they who dare to read his burning lines
Go mad,—and ever after with blind rage
Rave of the skiey secrets and bright signs :
But all they tell is vain ; for death entwines
The struggling utterance, and the words expire
Dumb,—self-consum'd, like some too furious fire.

XXXI.

—One night a revel had been held, and dance
And song had sounded in the ear of night,
And many a gallant that had grasped a lance,
And been the foremost in a bloody fight,
Then moved a measure with his lady bright,
And pressed her jewell'd arm and told his pain.
Alas ! that Love should ever speak in vain !

XXXII.

Only the lonely Eva sate apart,—
While young Chatillion in her sister's ear
Poured his love music, till her beating heart,
And eyes that glittering grew and large and clear,
And the strange transport and the crimson fear
That stained the beauty of their cheeks, betrayed
How much the lover loved, and how the maid.

XXXIII.

The midnight lamps were o'er them, and the flare
Of light, which shone at times and died away,
Glanced like the shifting sunshine on her hair,
And brought her ringlets out in rich array :
And there the lover's looks, like break of day,
Were seen, fixed—helpless :—Oh ! a radiant spell
Was on him, and he knew its perils well.

XXXIV.

But Eva, in the shadow dim, like one
Who sought her husband in the clouds, reclined ;
A vestal of the world,—because the Sun

Hid his tyrannic beauty :—there she pined,
Pale as a prophetess whose labouring mind
Gives out its knowledge ; but her up-raised eyes
Shone with the languid light of one who loves or dies.

XXXV.

So, in one bright creation (through the earth
Unmatch'd) is love writ down :—no words are there,
But all is clear like some eternal birth
Of heaven,—a golden star,—the azure air :
Oh ! I remember well how soft, how fair,
That vision shone,—how like a dream of youth,
How full of life, and love, and burning truth !

XXXVI.

Masses of living cloud were there,—and are ;
And Love is there, unseen ; and amorous light
Fills the dim ether ; and the passionate war
Of kisses, like the silence of the night,
Is *heard* ; and every branch and leaf is bright
With love ; and in the trembling waters near,
Tamed by some presence, drinks the bending deer.

XXXVII.

And in the midst—O girl ! whose curling limbs
 A god has breathed on till they sting the brain
 With beauty—Look ! how in her eye there swims
 Intolerable joy—

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XXXVIII.

Io !—fair Io !—thou didst dearly earn,
 By after wanderings and transformed hours,
 The love of Jove.—Fair Eva ! thou didst burn
 Self-martyred in thy green Provençal bowers,
 Consumed to dust before Apollo's powers.
 Both fell from too much love.—Sweet woman, *still*
 Is thy love-harvest filled with so much ill ?

XXXIX.

—That night of revelry the victim's mind
 Shook in its height : firm reason and clear thought
 Forsook her, and her soul awhile grew blind,

Seared by the light of love, and wandering sought
Its way through perilous regions now forgot,
Through haunts of death and life, and the throng'd way
Of darkness,—to insufferable day.

XL.

That night she lay within her silken nest,
White creature, dreaming till the golden dawn;
When Phœbus, shaking off his skiey rest,
Descended. Trembling, like a frightened fawn,
She lay, bewildered, pale:—The orient morn
Wept, and the Hours blushed scarlet, and the array
Of Heaven, (stars, moon, and clouds,) were swept away.

XLI.

No presence in the o'er-arching vault was seen
Save his,—Apollo's; who, unlike a God,
Quitted his fiery height, and on the green
Starr'd with white hyacinths and daisies, trod:
And wheresoe'er he stepped the flushing sod
Threw flowers from out its heart, and from her room
Came odours, like the heliotrope's perfume:

XLII.

Awhile he stayed :—he gazed,—perhaps a thought
That so much beauty was not born to die,
Assailed him ; but not long that pity wrought,
For through his brightening form and his large eye
Shot passion, shaming the immaculate sky,
Where kindness lives with love, and hate is known,
Like mortal follies, by its name alone.

XLIII.

He took her, gently, in his radiant arms,
And breathed on her, and bore her through the air,
Hushing from time to time her sweet alarms,
And whispering still that one so good and fair
Should dread no evil thought and know no care :
And still they flew, and around a lustre played,
Near them, as near a figure plays its shade.

XLIV.

Their course seemed pointed to some southern shore.
Over the waters where the trade-winds blew
They passed, and where men find the golden ore,

And where long since the Hesperian apples grew ;
While, far beneath, the Old world and the New
Stretched out their tiny shapes, and their thick chain
Of islands, spangling like bright gems the main.

XLV.

And then they moved beneath a lovelier sky,
O'er green savannahs where cool waters run ;
O'er hills and valleys ; o'er vast plains that lie
Flat,—desarts blistered by the Afric sun ;
Over spice-groves and woods of cinnamon ;
By Siam and Malay ; and many a fair
Bright country basking in the Indian air.

XLVI.

Whither they journeyed then, ah, who may tell !—
Beyond all limits that the sailor knows ;
Beyond the ocean ; and beyond the swell
Of mountains ; and beyond the Antarctic snows :
To some sweet haunt, 'tis told, where softly glows
Perpetual day,—some island of the air :
We know its beauty ; but we know not where.

XLVII.

—Eternal forests, on whose boughs the Spring
Hung undecaying, fenced the place around,
And amorous vines, (like serpents without sting)
Clung to the trees, or trailed on the green ground,
And fountains threw on high a silver sound,
And glades interminably long, between
Whose branches sported the grey deer, were seen.

XLVIII.

And from the clustering boughs the nightingale
Sang her lament ; while on a reedy stream,
Which murmured and far off was heard to fall,
The swan went sailing by, like a white dream ;
And somewhere near did the lone cuckoo call,
But none made answer ; and his amorous theme
The thrush loud uttered till it spoke of pain ;
And many a creature sang, but seemed to sing in vain.

XLIX.

There, rich with fruits, the tree of Paradise
(The plantain) spread its large and slender leaves,
And there the pictur'd palm was seen to rise,

And trembling aspen, and the tree that grieves,
(The willow) and sun-flowers like golden sheaves ;
The lady lily paler than the moon,
And roses, laden with the breath of June.

L.

And in the midst a crystal palace stood
On pillars shining with immortal gold :
Its gates were golden, and some artist good
Had carved them till each nook and corner told
Some wonder of the Sun or story old ;
And rainbow landscapes copied from the skies
Shone in the metal with a thousand dies.

LI.

Upon those gates no sounding horn was hung :
No warder answered from his watching tower :
But silence over all the place was flung,
Making it holy as Egeria's bower,
And gentle splendour, like the evening hour,
Mingled with shadows fine its finer ray,
And fed the place with beauty night and day.

LII.

All these the lover to his love displayed :—
The palace whose bright top was hid in heaven,
The lustrous pillars and the long arcade,
The statue,—where it seemed some God had striven
With immortality,—and failed, yet given
The marble likeness of Apollo's smile,
His grace, his glance almost,—but not his guile.

LIII.

There, a vast hall far spread and high was seen,
So high—the falcon might have tired his wing
Nor touched the roof, whereon, with stars between
Shone Heaven's wide kingdoms, all,—a radiant ring,
And from the midst Apollo seemed to spring—
(Was he the phantom of her hopes,—no more ?)
She trembled,—wept,—but still he seemed to soar.

LIV.

And, far away from out that central hall
Ran arched passages diverging far,
Each with its doors and range of rooms, and all

(Self-lighted as by some presiding star)
Shone spacious and the most harmonious jar
Of voices and irregular footsteps near
And busy words, like life, broke on her ear :

LV.

And music, like the dissonance of Gods,
Rich,—Bacchanalian, as when Hebe crowns
Their cups with kisses, and through all the abodes
Of Heaven a sudden shout breaks forth that drowns
The air with laughter, and shakes earthly towns
To dust, — immortal Music in her bower
Sung, till Apollo struck the golden hour.

LVI.

Then, in that stillness, Eva heard a voice
From one unseen beside her. Thus it said :
' Welcome my sovereign lady, and rejoice !
Fear not : but on the flowery pavements tread,
Or on these downy pillows rest your head,
Or bathe your beauty in the waters near,
Or drink,—behold, the nectarous draught is here.'

LVII.

She gazed,—and slowly from the marble ground
O'er-strewed with flowers a golden table sprung,
Where fruits of matchless fragrance did abound,
And nameless dainties all together flung,
And on their boughs Hesperian apples hung,
And nectar ravishing to taste,—like gleams
From Circe's eyes, or love-enchanted dreams.

LVIII.

Fair girl, she left untouched that nectarous wine,
Fruits and ambrosian food, and strayed along
The pictured rooms, all fair (and some divine)
With skiey stories since made plain by song,
And women, an imperishable throng,
Lifted from earth to heaven by force of love,
And purified by light and the glance of Jove.

LIX.

There ceilings spread abroad their cloudless hues,
And stars shone from them, and the sounds of wings
Were heard like rushing waters, when they lose

Their life in foam, and down the pillars springs
Ran like the fluid lightning, when it clings
(Or seems) around some pine or shattered oak,
And every room some bright and different marvel
spoke.

LX.

Through all the palace,—pillars, and arches wide,
And floors, and roofs, (it seemed a mystic plan,
And only by the curious eye espied)
Instinct with light a living splendour ran,
As blood goes streaming through the heart of man,
And every hinge and joint was fed by fire,
Which flowed half hidden like some veiled desire.

LXI.

All day she traversed her imperial home,
With wonder gazing, and strange mute delight ;
And then she prayed her absent love to come,
And bade him hurry the too slow twilight ;
And then the coming of immortal night
She dreaded, its sublime and dark array ;
And thus, 'tween fears and pleasure, fled the day.

LXII.

Twilight is come,—calm mournful hour, for those
Whom years have quelled, whom cold dread thoughts
engage,
But life hath fires before we reach its snows,
And youth treads fiercely on the ground that age
Shuns with a timid glance and sad presage ;
And twilight hath no terrors, no repose,
For hearts where Love's impetuous spirit glows.

LXIII.

Twilight is come : but where is he whose word
Should be as holy as the Heavens?—Afar
Through all the empyreal air no noise is heard,
Nor vision seen, nor bright descending star ;
No sight, no sound ; only the ebb and jar
Of meeting passions in one heart, until
A hymn arose which broke that silence chill.

1.

Apollo !—king Apollo !
In what enchanted region dost thou stay?—
Is it in the azure air

Or in the caverns hollow,
Which Thetis at the set of day
In the sea waters far away
Buildeth up, as blue and fair
As thy own bright kingdoms are?

2.

Oh, King of life and light !
O peerless Archer ! O triumphant God !
Behold !—the golden rod
Now pointeth to the promised hour,—twilight ;
And she who loves thee so
Is pale and full of woe.—
No wave nor throne have I,
No bower nor golden grove,
No palace built on high,
To tempt thee not to rove,
But truth, and such a love
As would not shame the sky,—
If these be nothing, Time
Shall teach me how to die.

3.

Yet come not, great Apollo ! come not here ;
The hour has vanished, and thou needs must sta
In those sea waters far away :—
For me,—neglect and fear
Are my fit bridal cheer :
An earthly creature what had I to do
With sights of heaven or pleasures of the skies !
Oh ! master and my king, thy slave despise !
Now from thy station wheresoe'er it be—
 Within the waving sea
 Or in the pathless blue—
 Look down, in thy divine
 Disdain, and from thy lips
 Shed darkness and eclipse,
The fit requital for a love like mine !—

LXIV.

She ended ; and above, as from a cloud,
The eternal sun broke forth :—no shape was there,
No voice, but soft winds all the branches bowed,

And wide illuminations filled the air,
And beauty looked so lovely that despair
Fled, and innocuous warmth and cheering light
Fell on the mournful girl like some late lost delight.

LXV.

No tear now stained her cheek ; no failing tones
Telling of anguish hid, or dull with pain ;
But grief is given to the wind that moans
Amongst the forest boughs, and to the main
And to the rivers all who must complain
Yet feel no sorrow to the end of time—
As years all filled with blood are freed of crime.

LXVI.

But when the twilight fell, that gentle child
Felt a strange terror, till a voice she knew
(It was Apollo's) spoke, but oh ! so mild,
So like familiar tones we know are true !
And his too fiery glance was quenched in dew :
“ Eva, my mortal love, the day has burned
To its decline, and lo ! I have returned.”

LXVII.

So spake he, and the maid with downcast eyes,
And flushing forehead which had lost its snow,
Him answered, (while her breast like summer-skies
Spread out its breathing paradise below,
And rose and fell as billows swell and flow)—
“ My master ! art thou here ? ”—and with a sigh
Raising her eyes, she saw him smiling nigh.

LXVIII.

Oh ! never was a smile so full of scorn
As that which glanced along his curved lip ;
And his eyes sparkled like the approach of morn ;
Yet sweeter were his words than winds that sip
The dew from hyacinths :—Oh ! canst thou strip
Thy bird of plumage, and her sweet despair,
Which flowed in music to thee, never spare ? —

LXIX.

“ Apollo ! king Apollo ! ”—That wild cry
Was heard in Ilium when its end was near,
From Priam’s Sybil daughter, who with an eye

Made bright by prophet dreams and wise by fear,
Saw the red ruin and the flashing spear
Through all the darkness of the untold to-morrow,
And heard the Spartan's cry, the Trojan's sorrow.

LXX.

Apollo! king Apollo!—Is thy scorn
Not dead,—and were Cassandra's tears in vain?
Her words (an oracle)—her life forlorn,
Stung through by unbelief and fierce disdain?—
Her crowned exile and her death of pain?—
Still dost thou ask new love and fresh despair,
And hopes born but to perish?—Spare! O spare!

LXXI.

I speak in vain:—The chariot of the hour
Is rolling onwards,—over kings and slaves,
Passionate spirits, and the crimson flower
Of love, which Hermes' magic never saves,—
Over rebellions and the gloom of graves,—
Through light and darkness, and the eternal woe
Of life,—to regions which no thought may know.

LXXII.

Older than ruin, or the dust that hides
Persepolis or Balbec, and yet fair
Like early manhood, the great Phantom rides
(Time or the Hour) above us:—Where, O where?—
Through Hell, and Heaven, in Earth, and the wide Air;
Invisibly he goes, and without sound,
Like Death, a tyrant,—shapeless but uncrowned.

LXXIII.

He passes:—Oh ! not all the suns that shine,
Not all the Autumn floods nor Winter's rain,
Nor all that poets tell of, though divine,
Shall clear thy annals of so foul a stain:—
He passes, and is gone ;—and I complain
Unto the silence ; and return dismayed
To tell thy latest grief, sad Provence maid !—

LXXIV.

The hour has passed ;—and Night, who laughs at time,
Shakes out her spangled hair in loose array,
And, clasped with coronets of gems sublime,

Sits like a queen, to whom, at death of Day,
(She bright successor) a whole world must pay
Low adoration,—while the sleepless care
Must watch her glittering vigils shining fair.

LXXV.

That night—Oh ! never shall its silent hours,
Its love—its darkness be profaned by me :
If I *must* tell, be it of vine-leaf bowers
Where Bacchanal delight is loud and free,
Or Aphrodite's home hung round with flowers,
Or coral branches from her native sea ;
For love is *her* wide boast : but clouds should hide
The young hot blushes of a human bride.

LXXVI.

And yet night came (voluptuous night !) and sleep
Weighed down the eye-lids of Apollo's bride,
Who sank into a tremulous slumber deep,
Believing now his falling locks she spied,
Or heard him breathing odours by her side,
Or felt his burning kisses on her lips,
Or saw his eyes bent o'er her, in eclipse.

LXXVII.

And once she dreamed he said "Awake ! arise,
Daughter of clay : Behold ! the truth is plain :
Thou hast looked love on me with impious eyes,
On me—a God, and with enchantments vain
Bound me, and thou must die." A thrilling pain
Traversed her heart, while thus the Pythian spoke,
And sleep was scared by terror, and she woke.

LXXVIII.

She rose, and saw him in his beauty laid
Beside her : O'er his limbs a tender light
Hung floating, and his head looked all arrayed
With a halo, as the glow-worm looks by night,
Or like a lunar rainbow pale and bright,—
Encompassed and enshrined by the clear breath
Of Heaven, which saves immortal frames from death :

LXXIX.

And on his lips there lay a rose-red leaf
Courting the kiss she gave, and did not fade—
(How could it feel a touch so soft and brief?)

And then she pressed the violet veins that strayed
Over his throat, and then shrank back afraid
Gazing upon the God—who calmly slept,
While to her couch the trembling creature crept.

LXXX.

This past she slept, and of sky-piercing towers
She dreamed, and banquets held beneath the moon,
And trod on stars, and through illumin'd bowers
Paced like a dancer, whom some eager tune
Leads on to pleasure which must perish soon :
Yet still by her white side Apollo lay,
(She dreamed) 'till darkness faded into day.

LXXXI.

The morning broke, and she was Phœbus' bride :
And evening fell :—But did the God return ?—
He came not,—he came never to her side ;
But her bright DREAM (*for 'twas a dream*) did burn
Madness upon her, and the world did spurn
Her story for a folly :—yet *she* believed ;
And o'er her widow'd passion meekly grieved.

LXXXII.

Like Ariadne, when in pale despair
The Athenian left her,—so sad Eva pined,
And so she went complaining to the air,
And gave her tresses to the careless wind :—
The colour of her fate was on her mind,
Dark, death-like, and despairing ;—and her eye
Shone lustrous like the light of prophecy.

LXXXIII.

Over the grassy meads,—beside lone streams,
To perilous heights which no weak step could reach
She wandered, feeding her unearthly dreams
With musing, and would move the tremulous beech
And shuddering aspen with imploring speech ;
For nothing that did live, save they (who sighed)
Pitied the downfall of her amorous pride.—

* * * * *

* * * * *

LXXXIV.

—There is a story:—that some lady came
To Paris; and while she—('tis years ago!)
Was gazing at the marbles, and the fame
Of colour which threw out a sunset glow,
A tall girl entered, with staid steps and slow,
The immortal hall where Phœbus stood arrayed
In stone,—and started back, trembling, dismayed.

LXXXV.

Yet still she looked, tho' mute, and her clear eye
Fed on the image till a rapture grew,
Chasing the cloudy fear that hovered nigh,
And filling with soft light her glances blue;
And still she trembled, for a pleasure new
Thrilled her young veins, and stammering accents ran
Over her tongue, as thus her speech began:—

LXXXVI.

“ Apollo ! king Apollo !—art thou here ?
Art thou *indeed* returned ? ”—and then her eyes
Outwept her joy, and hope and passionate fear
Seized on her heart, as tow’rds the dazzling prize
She moved, like one who sees a shape that flies,
And stood entranced before the marble dream,
Which made the Greek immortal, like his theme.

LXXXVII.

Life in each limb is seen, and on the brow
Absolute God ;—no stone nor mockery shape
But the resistless *Sun*,—the rage and glow
Of Phœbus as he tried in vain to rape
Evergreen Daphne, or when his rays escape
Scorching the Lybian desert or gaunt side
Of Atlas, withering the great giant’s pride.

LXXXVIII.

And round his head and round his limbs have clung
Life and the flush of Heaven, and youth divine,
And in the breathed nostril backwards flung,

And in the terrors of his face, that shine
Right through the marble, which will never pine
To paleness though a thousand years have fled,
But looks above all fate, and mocks the dead.

LXXXIX.

Yet stands he not as when blithely he guides
Tameless Eoüs from the golden shores
Of morning, nor when in calm strength he rides
Over the scorpion, while the lion roars
Seared by his burning chariot which out-pours
Floods of eternal light o'er hill and plain,
But, like a triumph, o'er the Python slain :

XC.

He stands with serene brow and lip upcurl'd
By scorn, such as Gods felt, when on the head
Of beast or monster or vain man they hurled
Thunder, and loosed the lightning from its bed,
Where it lies chained, by blood and torment fed ;
His fine arm is outstretched,—his arrow flown,
And the wrath flashes from his eyes of stone,

XCI.

Like Day—or liker the fierce morn, (so young)—
Like the sea-tempest which against the wind
Comes dumb, while all its terrible joints are strung
To death and rapine :—Ah ! if he unbind
His marble fillet now and strike her blind—
Away, away !—vain fear ! unharmed she stands,
With fastened eyes and white beseeching hands.

XCII.

—Alas ! that madness, like the worm that stings,
Should dart its venom through the tender brain !
Alas ! that to all ills which darkness brings
Fierce day should send abroad its phantoms plain,
Shook from their natural hell, (a hideous train)
To wander through the world, and vex it sore,
Which might be happy else for ever-more.

XCIII.

Lust, and the dread of death, and white Despair,
(A wreck, from changed friends and hopes all fled),
Ambition which is sleepless, and dull care

Which wrinkles the young brow, and sorrows bred
From love which strikes the heart and sears the head,
The lightning of the passions,—in whose ray
Eva's bright spirit wasted, day by day.

XCIV.

She was Apollo's votary, (so she deemed)
His bride, and met him in his radiant bowers,
And sometimes, as his priestess pale beseeemed,
She strewed before his image, like the Hours,
Delicate blooms, spring buds and summer flowers,
Faint violets, dainty lilies, the red rose,—
What time his splendour in the Eastern glows.

XCV.

And these she took and strewed before his feet,
And tore the laurel (his own leaf) to pay
Homage unto its God, and the plant sweet
That turns its bosom to the sunny ray,
And all which open at the break of day,
And all which worthy are to pay him due
Honour,—pink, saffron, crimson, pied, or blue.

XCVI.

And ever, when was done her flowery toil,
She stood (idolatress !) and languished there,
She and the God, alone ;—nor would she spoil
The silence with her voice, but with mute care
Over his carved limbs a garment fair
She threw, still worshipping with amorous pain,
Still watching ever his divine disdain.

XCVII.

—Time past :—and when that German lady came
Again to Paris, where the image stands,
(It was in August, and the hot sun-flame
Shot thro' the windows)—midst the gazing bands
She sought for her whose white-beseeching hands
Spoke so imploringly before the stone,
(The Provence girl)—she asked ; but she was gone.

XCVIII.

Whither none knew ;—Some said that she would come
Always at morning with her blooming store,
And gaze upon the marble, pale and dumb,

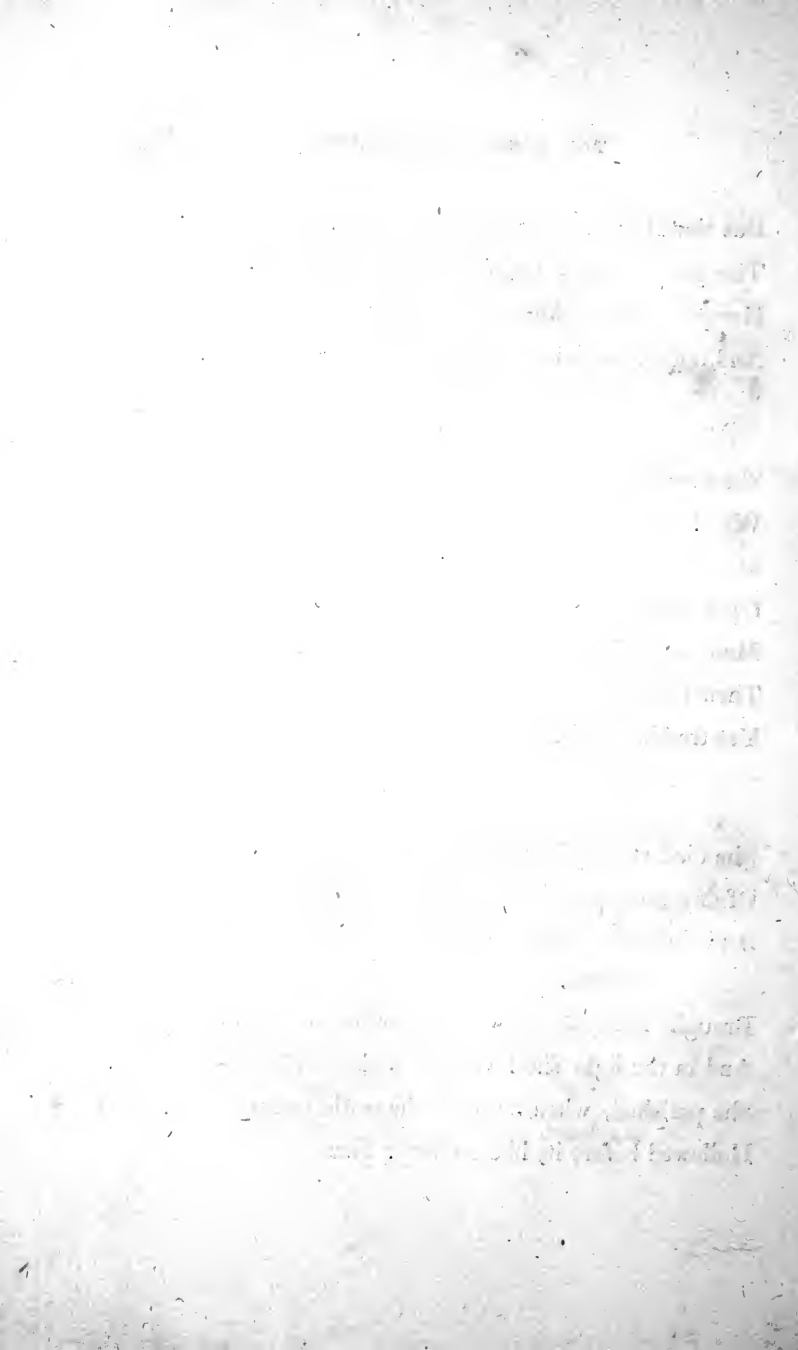
But that, they thought, the tender worship wore
'The girl to death ; for o'er her eyes and o'er
Her paling cheek hues like the grave were spread :
And one at last knew further ;—She was dead.

XCIX.

She died, mad as the winds,—mad as the sea
Which rages for the beauty of the moon,
Mad as the poet is whose fancies flee
Up to the stars to claim some boundless boon,
Mad as the forest when the tempests tune
Their breath to song and shake its leafy pride,
Yet trembling like its shadows :—So she died.

C.

She died at morning when the gentle streams
Of day came peering thro' the far east sky,
And that same light which wrought her maddening
dreams,
Brought back her mind. She awoke with gentle cry,
And in the light she loved she wished to die :—
She perished, when no more she could endure,
Hallowed before it, like a martyr pure.



THE
LETTER OF BOCCACCIO.



As the following 'Letter' involves a few particulars of the early life of the famous Italian novelist, it may be as well to state briefly what are and what are not facts.

Of GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO, the great author of the 'Decameron,' little seems to be known. He was born at Certaldo, (or Florence) about the year 1313, and when he arrived at manhood, was, according to some accounts, placed under the law professor *Cino de Pistoia*. His father dying soon after, Boccaccio gave himself up to poetry, and studied also the classics and the sciences with great effect. He himself says, in one of his letters, (to Petrarch I believe) that he was the means of introducing the Greek language into Etruria.

The circumstance of Boccaccio having led a dissolute life at Florence, and having been reproved by a Carthusian friar, are stated as facts, if I recollect rightly, in Mrs. Dobson's *Life of Petrarch*; and that he was intimate with the famous lover of Laura is known to all. The story which I have admitted, of his having been in

love with a lady near Florence, is the fiction of the authoress of 'Petrarque et Laure:' although he was actually attached to a female, whom he celebrates under the name of Fiametta. Some persons say that this lady was MARY of ARRAGON, (daughter of Robert, King of Naples) whom Boccaccio first saw in the church of the Cordeliers. Whether this be the absolute fact or not, I leave to others. It is sufficient at least for the origin of this 'Letter,' which the reader will suppose to be addressed to *her*.

THE LETTER

OF

B O C C A C C I O.

O THOU, before whose beauty my young spirit
Hath bowed,—so long oppressed by amorous pain ;
If I have sold the thoughts which I inherit
From my free nature, do not *thou* arraign
That now, poor slave, I bear Love's glittering chain !
It wears me,—it consumes me ; yet *I love*,
And that is my reward.—Shall I return
Into the past, and quench the fires that burn
Within and hallow me, (as some dark grove
By ever-living lamps is made most pure) ?—
Can I return,—I who have dwelt with Love,
And fed on passionate dreams ? Can I endure
That tyranny of thought which strips the heart
Bare of its hope, and gives it—barren truth ?—

Thou wast the virgin idol of my youth :—

Thou wast?—thou *art* ; and shall a weak dismay
Of possible ill lure my weak heart to stray?
Shall I be told that woman is not true?—
That Love hath died who was a god of yore?—
That Fortune is a sea without a shore,
Where they who venture not have nought to rue?—
Shall I believe all this and look on *thee*?—
It cannot be,—it *may* not, if I array
My mind with faith, as in my better day :—
So with a bright belief I look on thee,
Thou beauty of the South, as on the Sun,
Who deigns to gild the slave *he* looks upon.
—Shall nothing but thy shadow fall on *me*?

'Tis true I have not much that can adorn
Thy conquest,—not in fortune,—not in name ;
But I may prostrate still the little fame
I have, and even this *thou* wilt not scorn ;
Thou wilt not, for thine eye is like a morn
Whereby men augur of the day to come,
And in thy silence thou wast never dumb ;
So, spirit sweet, will I of thee foretell.

Thy young voice is a truer oracle
Than that which in the old Saturnian days
Sounded at Delos in Apollo's praise,
And did the tasks of Pagan prophets well ;
And thy white beauty is (for never yet
Could Nature mould such creature and forget
The perfect soul) assurance unto me
Of thy unuttered fidelity :—
Therefore, by yellow Hymen, do I swear
To make thee my reliance, my sweet care,
My all of memory, my extremest hope :—

Fool that I am, methinks I cannot cope
With my antagonist ills : the idle shade
Of joy stalks forth and straight I am betrayed.
Hope has fled far : the future, which was late
Dream-bright, is now a calm unaltering fate ;
And Friendship has usurped the name of Love ;
And passion, bright as the fire the Titan stole,
Has burned to its decline. Do not reprove ;
For still, at times, it flames beyond control,
And is again the madness of my soul.

I will not change : or if I wander, soon
Shall I return, and be as is the moon
Who, tho' she change, returneth, nothing loth,
And faithful to the beauty of her youth ?
Like her my peerless love shall shine,—yet not
On altars or in sepulchres, but where
My faith to thee shall never be forgot :—
It shall be holy as the autumnal air,
And fashioned into music, and along
The tides of time be borne, with things as fair,
In all the immortality of song.

It shall live unalarm'd by hint or jest,
The one great virtue of Boccaccio's breast :—
For 'tis not erring wishes, nor the shock
Of doubts which force the changing man to mock
Love in his temple,—'till he dies of shame,
But 'tis the laughing lie—the petty blame
That frets and turns the human milk to gall,
And, tho' it scarce seem bitter, poisoneth all.—

II.

When last I saw thee—(following in thy train
Was I)—O would those times might be again !
They were too happy, sweet ! and therefore brief,
And withered, like an early budding leaf,
Which, while its cold associates still are seen
Flourishing, having lived its age, (in hours !)
And wasted on the wanton Spring its powers,
Doth die upon its stem of summer green :
Therefore it may not be.—O princely maid !
When last I saw thee, was not promise made
That I should tell my story (all) to thee ?
Yes,—we were sitting underneath a tree
Which shook its odours on the Baian waves.
Thou must remember it :—We gazed together
Enchanted by the glassy sea that laves
The Cape and islands, in that sunny weather
Seen plainly from the Pausillippo hill.
Hast thou forgotten how we talked of him
Whose ashes slumber there, holy and still ?
From which his name, that never shall grow dim,

Sprang like a lunar glory, gently driven
Across the many-coloured plains of Heaven,
Until, as stars whose glittering toils are o'er,
It sank into its place, and moved no more.

Now, hearken to my story!—When I came
First to this world, and saw the morning flame
From the grey East, streaking the sky with bars
Of light—(this while the shepherd of the stars,
Great Lucifer, was busied in the West)—
Imaginations strange perplexed my breast,
Like ghosts some ancient house untenanted :
And, after this, pale Learning sowed her seed
Within my memory, and I became
Such as I am. This, and no more, I claim
From the remembrance of my childish time:
Yet 'twas so like the period of my prime
(The interval was nothing,—buried years
Of boyhood,—idle, full of pains, and fears)
That the first germ of what may never bloom
Was born, it seems, in me,—a sweet perfume
Clinging about my birth, and making still

'Those years seem sage,—not comprehensible
To me or others ; but 'tis often so ;
In budding, happiness is likest woe :
Great thought is pain until the strengthen'd mind
Can lift it into light : the soul is blind
Until the suns of years have cleared away
The film that hangeth round its wedded clay.

Then Love came—Love !—How like a star it streamed
In infancy upon me,—till I dreamed,
And 'twas as pure and almost cold a light,
And led me to the sense of such delight
As children know not ; so, at last I grew
Enamoured of beauty and soft pain,
And felt mysterious pleasure wander through
My heart, and animate my childish brain ;
And thus I rose (for patient still was I
And a true worshipper)—to poetry.

Thou radiant spirit of the Muses ! never
Will I profane thee with adulterate rhyme :
Love is *thy* theme, or Glory. Never, never

Will I mix up the cavils of my time
(Things of an instant, which a day disarms
Of worth) or this my petty state's alarms,
Or jealousies, or vulgar tricks of need,
With 'peerless Poesy,'—a poor base breed
Are they, not children whom the stream of song
Should clasp in its bright arms, as slow along
It winds into Eternity. The theme
Whereon *my* charmed spirit loves to dream
Is *thou*,—Queen!—princess of that sunny throne
Seated upon the waters, where alone
The glory of the world is not a name:
Even in Florence it is not the same;
Yet here are woods and rivers, and the swell
Of hills,—the pastoral mead, and lawny dell:
But here lives not the Sea:—The ocean waters
Wander not here, nor lash our sylvan ground,
Making immortal noise, nor sound for sound
Send back to our mountain echoes when the daughters
Of the pine-forests shout in storm and gloom:
And we have not thy skies, nor thy perfume
Winging the azure air,—yet through green vales

Our Arno runs, and where the slope prevails
Clings with bright kisses, till the yielding earth
Gives forth its coloured sweets, a cloudy birth !

III.

Now shall I pass unto my boyhood?—no :
It is enough, perhaps, that thou shouldst know
That time was mournful to me :—It is gone ;
And manhood like a radiant morning shone,
And Beauty lit her lamps that I might see
Intenser day : Then life was Heaven to me :
My soul was perfected by passion,—pure
As marble ere the Parian pierced the mine
Wherein the carv'd Diana lay secure,
Yet lovely as that shape which is divine
Tho' mortal, being born and warmed to life
By light as is the rainbow, (when the roar
Of rain hath passed) which was but cloud before.

I loved :—I tell thee thou art not the first
(Tho' fairest) of the creatures of my love :

For early did the floods of passion burst
My veins and overwhelm me,—yet I strove
Never to tamper with my nature then,
Nor call back my desire into the den
Wherein it had reposed for twenty years ;
For I had hope ('twas mixed I own with fears)
That the strong lustre of my love would lead
My thoughts unto their fountain springs, and feed
My soul with light :—'Twas then I penned some tales
Where Beauty is the bride and her son ever
The God and master of my poor endeavour.
O mistress ! thou shalt read the tales I have writ,
For love is there, and reason, and a wit
Which though it be abandoned at its birth,
And vanish for a time, shall rise again,
And in remoter places of this earth
Shall be a treasure to great men,* whose fame
Shall be commingled with my lasting name,
Co-heritors of bright futurity.
O light of my Renown, I see thee on high !

* Shakspeare, Beaumont and Fletcher.

This is not vanity : it hath (bright faith !)
Its birth in darkness as the Lightning hath,
And yet it shall be seen from shore to shore,
And heralded by spirits who shall soar
On their own wings and mine unto the sky,
Supremest poets, who can never die ;
For Genius, which looketh like the light
Is as the earth eternal, and for aye
Is busy with the brain, and still at night
Breathes beauty on the poet as he lies
In thought, and doth submit to be compressed,
And languisheth or brighteneth as is best ;—
And so is verse conceived which never dies.

IV.

In youth, I read (with Cino) serious law,
And should have read till now, but that I saw
How dull and selfish the civilian's toil,
Ne'er ranging from his desk unless to spoil ;
And then they placed a cowl upon my head ;
Ill change, and vain ! for I was forest-bred,

And loved to wander in mine infancy,
And made a young acquaintance with the sky,
With rocks and streams, rich fruits and blushing flowers,
And fed upon the looks of Morning, when
She parteth with the beauty of the Hours ;
And so I quitted the most holy men
With whom I herded, and (thus willed my sire)
I sought fair Florence :—Here I did aspire
Unto a base renown, and gave my all
Of passion to a faithless woman's thrall.
I revelled ; and (with riot and bright wine
Mad) did assert that span of life divine,
And shouted in the stern Carthusian's ear,
(Who having learned his lesson taught me mine)
“ Love is but slavery and Faith a fear.”
O shame ! for then I knew not Love nor Faith :
No knowledge of them had I more than hath
He who is mute, or deaf, or blind from birth,
Of speech or graceful motion. On the earth
I lived as doth the hermit, who hath given
His wisdom here away for hope of Heaven,
And shut the fountains of his thought with prayer :

So, misted by a strange voluptuous air,
I travelled on in intellectual gloom,
Forgetting the dull poison in perfume;
But I awoke:—I saw a face as fair
As Dian's,—or thine own; yet touched with care
And pale, my princess,—tho' *thy* cheek is pale;
And with eyes downcast,—thus do *thine* prevail;
Her voice was silvered,—like my Naples' queen,
And her hair braided as thine own hath been,
When on some lamped feast, solely arrayed
In thy own costly beauty, thou hast strayed
(Like some white creature of the upper air)
Amongst us, marvelling at sight so fair.

This girl of whom I tell thee (—she is dead,
And thou wilt anger not at what is said)
I loved as I love thee. Less calm, perhaps,
Was that regard than the one now which wraps
My senses in its clear unchanging light;
And yet it yielded me most great delight:
But I was very young, and scarcely knew
Love's quick gradations, tho' it fann'd and flew

Round and around me, and my heart was fire,
Until borne onwards by my wing'd desire
I traversed an Elysium.—

There may be
Passion like mine,—as true, certain more free,
But never was delight so large as mine
When I lay panting at Olympia's feet,
And she—she smiled ! It was a smile heav'n-sweet,—
Like Juno's when by Jove she did recline
Clasped in the Cytherean zone. I sprung
Into her arms and there bewildered hung
On her red lip and gazed *within* her eye,
Which turned and misted when my own was nigh :
—Why do I tell thee this ?—why, but because
I love thee, and submit to all the laws
Which the sweet tyranny of Love has sealed,
And Truth is one,—and lo ! I have revealed.

V.

When first I saw her—(young Olympia !)
She lived not far from Florence. One may stray

Unto the valley where her cottage stood
On a bright morning, be the season good,
Summer or latest spring : Her dwelling was
Fenced round by trees which shatter'd the fierce air
To fragments, pine and oak ; and ash was there
Which leaves its offspring berries to the grass,
And citron woods that shook out vast perfume,
And myrtles dowried with their richest bloom.
There dwelt she, sylvan goddess !—there she first
Swam on my sight : I thought my heart would burst
With transport as I saw her float along
Tow'rds me, and slowly read the carved song
Which on the oaken rind my knife had writ :
There was some idle praise, but more of wit
Had grown and mingled with that forest verse,
And I would often with a laugh rehearse
The song, thinking at times that some weak maid
Might love such incense if she thither strayed :
But *I* was to be victim : I had gone
Like an erratic fire upon my course,
Over the Heaven of beauty, all alone,
And now I felt Love's chaste and supreme force

Press on my very heart, until in pain
I utter'd consecrated vows,—in vain.
—She perished in her youth ; nor should I now
Have told thus much, but that upon thy brow
I saw forgiveness—('twas in fancy this)
And smiles that recognized my vanished bliss
As a thing risen from the grave, and bright
As ever in the summer of thy sight.

When pale Olympia died my heavy mind
Grief-smitten languished to a deep eclipse ;
Yet brief, for I arose, half sorrow-blind,
And on her marble-pale (but lovely) lips
Laid the last benediction of true faith,
And grew an alter'd man. Great misery hath
A lustre in it, like the clouded moon,
When, of her darkness unattired soon,
She streams illuminating land and sea :
So grief soon cast undazzling light on me ;
I saw the many faults, the many ills,
The purer pleasures too that haunt sweet life,
And I determined me to quit the strife

And fever of rebellious joy, which fills
The mind with dull oblivion and sad care,
And scorn of all things here, gracious or fair.

VI.

Now will I tell thee how I kissed the air
Of Naples, and first faced its visions fair,—
Its blue skies and Palladian palaces,
(Like Eastern dreams,)—statues and terraces,
And columns lustrous with poetic thought ;
All filled with groups arrayed in antique dress,
(Nymphs and Arcadian shapes, gods, goddesses)
From base to palmy capital marble-wrought,
And colonnades of marble, fountain-cool,
Amongst whose labyrinthine aisles the breeze
Roamed at its will, and gardens green, and trees
Fruited with gold, and walks of cypresses,
Where Revel held her reign (a gay misrule)
Nightly beneath the stars. And there the seas
Which wander in and out thy sunny bay,
Soothe Ischia and the crowned Procida,
Bright islands, with a thousand harmonies,

Or answer with rich cries, from shore to shore,
The anguish of the great Vesuvian roar,
When that earth-tempest, scattering dust and fire
From its red heart in torment, doth aspire
To Heaven, as did an angel.—Many sights
I saw, beneath the softest sun that lights
The Italian world to morning, tho' thine earth
Was then not teeming with its fiery birth,
But lay in huge repose, outstretched far,
Like a giant slain, or sad, or worn with war.—

But wherefore do I lend to thoughts like these
My perplex'd soul?—Thy calm-enchained seas
Are nothing now: thy purple Appenines
(Hither they stretch, clothed all with gloomy pines
From head to foot) are nothing: Summer now
Is nought; and Spring is gone; and Winter rears
His head and shakes the frost-locks on his brow,
And laughs at by-gone days and perish'd years:
O days!—yet one is my perpetual care,
Even now: I cannot lose *that* day so fair
(It shineth as a precious diamond set

In my poor round of thought) when first I met
In the Cordélier church, *thee*,—like a dream—
A fascination, into light or air
Dissolving,—chaunting thy melodious theme.
Ah, peerless princess ! do not *thou* forget !—

Oh ! with what weary steps my feet had trod
Street, square, and murmuring beech, and garden sod,
Till harassed by the languor of the hour,
I stole for refuge to thy church :—The power
Of music was awake, and to the wind
Just stirring, the most solemn organ pined,
And spoke, and seemed in sorrow to complain,
While, mingling with its mystic tones, a strain
Of song fell dying from a priestess' lips,—
Such song it was (so sweet) as must eclipse
All sounds for ever. My dull spirit grew
Brighter—more tranquil ; and I paced through
The stone-cold aisles and touched the altar steps :
There saw I—what ?—a vision ! in the depths
Of holy aspiration lost : Her eye—
Thine eye—(oh ! thine it was) journeyed on high

Amongst the wondrous Heavens, with such a glance
As might allure a seraph from his trance
Of adoration, when the rebel king
Passes the constellations, and dares fling
Delusion in the eyes of angels bright.
I saw thy soft eye wander, like a light
Starry,—meteorous ; at last it wept
Rich, happy tears, and midst its lashes slept.—
I stood—(how often have I told thee this !)
Enchanted to a vague oblivious bliss,
Like one who in a heedless hour hath drank
Odours Circean, and brain-charmed sank
Into some sweet futurity of joy :—
He, waking from his dream, with sore annoy
Feeleth that still he stands a thing world born,
Heart-smitten, self-despised, alone, forlorn.

Yet not thus I :—for, when my alarmed heart
Turned, like a bird to some magician's spell,
Tow'rd thee,—I saw thee still in beauty dwell
Before me, with rais'd eyes,—silent,—apart,
As though the sense of song would not depart.

—At last, a fine and undulating motion,
Like that of some sea-bloom which with the ocean
Moveth, surprized thee in thy holy lair,
And stole thee out of silence, lady fair !
I saw thee go,—scarce touching the cold earth,
As beautiful as Beauty at her birth,
Sea-goddess, when from out the foam she sprung
Full deity, and all the wide world hung
Mute and in marvel at perfection born.
I languish while I think of thee : The morn
Was not more bright, nor balmy eve as soft,
Nor music heard in dreams wandering aloft :
Thy cheek outblushed the sunset, and thy hand—
O white enchantment ! I have read and scanned
Its page, and tasted (once) its perfect bliss :—

VII.

Fair creature pardon ! Those were happy days
(Were not they, princess ?) when within thy gaze
I basked as doth a snake beneath the sun :
—Yet, wherefore, after all that I have done

Of folly, call me like the serpent grey,
Which hath been wise esteemed from earliest day !
I only on the flowers of thought have hung
As yet, and I have not the adder's tongue,
Nor am I wary as that creature is :
Yet have I stolen from thee the poor bliss
Of ignorance, and wedded thy fine mind
To intellectual shapes and fancies bright,
And taught thee to look at the dazzling light
Of Truth, which striketh the dull sinner blind.
We two have read together glorious rhyme
Which Homer old and his great brothers writ,
In Attica and Greece, and the world lit
With Fame through everlasting thought and time.—
And we have read my master Petrarch's lays,
And fed his learned lamp with words of praise
Whereat he kindly smiled. Gracious is he :
(Like a good spirit hath he been to me,
A light in the perilous dark ;) his soul is full
Of all that is wise and great and beautiful,
And wheresoever, princess, thou shalt go,
Wear thou his well-lamented songs of woe

Close to thy soul :—to mine they are a calm ;
A shadow to my passion,—(like the palm
Which hangeth cool above the Indian's brow :)
A fountain where my brain may bathe its fever :
A refuge which is sure and tireth never ;
And to my wounded thought sweet and perpetual balm.

Would I might call unto thy heart the hours,
Those pleasant hours, when we roamed so free,
Listening and talking by the Naples' sea !
Or gathering from thy father's gardens flowers
To braid thy hair on some feast-coming night :—
Oh ! still most dear are those gone hours to me ;
Yet dearer those when at the young eve-light,
Seated familiar near thy cedar tree,
We watched the coming moon, and saw how she
Journeyed above us on her sightless track,
And chased with serene looks the fleecy rack,
Or smiled as might the huntress-queen of Heaven
Floating, attended by her starry court,
O'er plain and mountain where their shadowy sport
Is again revealed,—or when all passion-driven,

Leaving the azure moors she seeks her way
Through cloud and tempest and the peal'd alarms
Of thunder, and the lightning's quivering wrath,
Guided by Love unto the Latmian's arms.—

Oh ! so wast thou by love and duty guided,
And we were ruled by thee ; for each one prided
Himself upon obedience,—not in vain,
For thou wast as a virtue without stain,
A visible perfection shining clear,
A creature fairer than man worships here.

—Mammon is worshipped *here*, an idol base ;
And Belial, cozener, (varnished round with grace
And smiling sin)—and the blood-hungry God
Black Moloch, whose large stained feet have trod
Temples down to the dust and holy towers,
And ravaged the green fields and peasants' homes,
And filled the river wheresoe'er it roams
And the great Sea with gore : The forests deep
He hath cursed, and startled from their innocent sleep
And cast upon their tops his red rain showers ;
And he hath killed the oak that stood for ages

To bear his slaughters on the ocean wide,
And he hath torn the books of saints and sages,
And struck the house of Science in his pride,
And drained the widow of her refuge tear,
(The last) and bade the young bride live alone,
And mocked the sire's grey hairs, the orphan's moan :—
Fierce WAR, in whatsoever shape he comes
A curse—Bellona-like, or fiery-red,
Or like a comet staring kingdoms dead,—
Or heralded by steeds and stormy drums,
Blood and the fear of death and pennons flying,
And close behind the murdered dead, and dying,
Insolent ever,—hateful in all hues
Figures and mocks and signs wherewith the Muse
Hath hid him from the execrating world ;
Whether with flashing arms and flags unfurl'd
He stands outnumbering the thick leaves at noon,
Or sends his trumpets braying at the moon,
Or runs from rank to rank, like courage caught
From victors grey by those who never fought :—

* * * * *

But *thou*—O princess ! thou wast born to save

The frail world from oblivion. Thou didst give
A light more lovely than did ever live
On earth or the wide waters, or in air,
Or such as are upon the blue sky lying,
To lift low passion from its brute despair,
And save the poetry of love from dying.

I thought that beauty was a fable, framed
To enchant the soul of boyhood into day,
Lest it should lie in slumbers dark away;
I thought that life would such chained dreams dis sever;
But *thou* didst shine upon me :—I was shamed
And struck to adoration dumb, for ever.
Thou wonder of the earth ! fable or dream
Never entranced like thee : no thought, nor theme,
Vision however wild nor loneliest mood,
Imagination, with her airy brood
Of spirits that go mad beyond the stars
(But here are chained and fettered by the bars
Of earthly things too palpable)—ev'n She
Cannot from out her empire wide and free

Call up a beauty beautiful like mine :—
I kiss thee from the distance, Queen divine !

VIII.

Why did I lose thee ?—Wherefore was I sent
(Gently, 'tis true) away to banishment,
With such a passion clinging to my soul ?—
I cannot tell thee half its huge controul,
Its fiery folly,—its so proud despair,
Its scorn,—aye of itself ; nay, scorn of thee !
Dost thou not marvel how such things should be ?
They were ; but I am well ;—and yet not thine !

. . . And thou hast passed from me !—Do I repine ?—
I ask my heart in vain ;—it answereth not.
My soul hath but one sight :—It looks alone
Into the future, and the past which shone
So bright is now (save some few dreams) forgot.
—A change now as I write is happening.
My mind doth re-assume its strength, and fling
Away Hate, Envy, Melancholy,—blind

Errors which hung like clouds upon my mind,
And now I stand strong and with new born power
Arrayed, fit champion for a darker hour ;
My sight is piercing bright : my reason free,
Unfettered, even by love for thee :—

Yet often, methinks, as I lie pondering
Under the evening boughs at sunset pale,
I hear thee,—like that strange voice wandering
Amongst the vernal thickets, ere winds bring
Perfume from roses or across the vale
Enchantments come from the lost nightingale,
Before the morn-fed lark her matin weaves,
Or the thrush whistles, or the stock-dove grieves,
I hear thee,—sweeter than all sounds that be ;
I see thee, too, waving along :—I see
Thy black Italian glances, and they flash
Amorous delight upon me, till I dash
My burning forehead in the fringed stream,
And then I find thee (what thou art)—a dream !
This frets me, shakes me ; but at last I rise
Emboldened by the pain, and through the skies

All starry tracking my sublunar way,
Utter,—as poets used when Pindus lay
Open to Heavenly ears, and verse was strong
With fate and peril,—some prophetic song.—

CONCLUSION.

Farewell !—The bars which hang around our prison
Are nigh dissolved : The sun hath set and risen
Again, and flung new morning on my world.
The aspect of the future is all wonder :
Innocuous lightnings, unallied to thunder,
Are every where in sport lustrously hurled.

A Vision of the Deep, of Earth and Heaven,
Is opened on me,—and my sight is driven
Amongst the tombs and towers of men to be :
Eternity flows back with all her fountains,
And scythed Time lays bare the horizon mountains,
That hide the world to come even from thee.

I see a Paradise where peerless flowers
Laugh in perpetual light, and crystal bowers
Fashioned for lovers whispers always sweet ;
And rich pavilions by the green woods shaded,
And airy shapes whose bows are violet-braided,
And forest walks trodden by delicate feet.

I see the lion and the lamb together,
The white dove hiding by the falcon's feather,
And the fierce vulture near his victim lie :
I see the peasant and the prince adorning
Equality and peace : I hear the warning
Of Earth, loud-telling her futurity.

I see the Deep, and midst its caverns hoary,
Gold, helmets, statues, famous once in story,
And jewels brighter than in Ormus' mine :
I see the shadows of the Deep (its daughters)
Floating afar amongst the azure waters,
Or streaming by my eyes in dance divine.

And in the air I see illustrious treasures
(On summits higher than the eagle measures)
Of amethystine light, and rainbow shapes ;
And voices touch my ear, like running rivers
When first the Spirit of the Spring delivers
The world, and Winter like a dream escapes.

And now, a cloud, so vast no thought may span it,
Comes travelling on, and—as when some huge planet
Doth deluge the next orb with black eclipse,
It overshadoweth the world : Its hour
Is come—is gone, like the wild Bacchant's power,
Who dies with the bright frenzy on her lips.—

—'Tis past :—and the wide scenes are gone for ever :
The past like some slow-fading lamp doth quiver :
And in the present only doth my soul
Live, like a spirit,—by the tempest shaken,
Yet full of that bright strength that shall awaken
The world from error, and its blind controul.—

Farewell !—Ever the same, thy friend, thy lover,
Boccaccio liveth. Though the wide world over
Fate shall exile him, yet no change shall bend
His courage, or resolving firmly taken :
But, though by every friend and hope forsaken,
Still shall Boccaccio be thy hope, thy friend.

Thy home lies far away : but every feature
Of thy soft beauty, thou imperial creature,
Within my heart of hearts will I retain :
Thy fortunes and mine own are far divided ;
Thine to a throned chair, by duty guided,
Shines fair—Away, unto the sunny Spain !

Perhaps, with somewhat of my old emotion,
My eye may glance at times across the ocean,
And through the cloud-fed billows when they flee
To Heav'n, and through the phantom-peopled ether,
I may behold thee still,—wandering hither
An exile from thy olive shores,—to me.

And *should* I see thee on the amorous waters
Treading with white feet bare, as once the daughters
Of wing'd magicians could by some fine spell,
I'll clasp thee, beauty of the world !—though madness
Rain down, or dazzling death, or endless sadness
Cling like remorse to me.—Farewell, farewell !—

1864

1865

1866

1867

1868

1869

THE FALL OF SATURN.

A VISION.

To Charles Lamb:

Rest, gentle heart: thy memory shall
* nor be forgotten, it is pure as gold.
Succeeding years shall hold
The kindest humanist God ever made

THIS VISION OF
THE FALL OF SATURN

IS INSCRIBED

TO CHARLES LAMB

BY HIS ADMIRER AND SINCERE FRIEND

THE AUTHOR.

Good Friend! whose spirit, like an April day,
Is full of change,—bright flashes and some rain,
Fantastic, gay,—yet gentle more than gay,
And rich and deep as in the populous main,
Take—(if thou wilt)—my song. I build my fame
Beneath the shadow of thy rising name,
* (Which shall not pass away while wit shall be,)
Proud to associate my verse with thee.



THE FALL OF SATURN.

A VISION.

I DREAM—I dream—I dream—
Of shadow and light,—of pleasure and pain,
Of Heaven,—of Hell.—And visions seem
Streaming for ever athwart my brain.
The present is here, and the past that fled
So quick, is returned with its buried dead,
And the future hath bared its scrolls of fame,
And I see the ‘is’ and the ‘was’ the same,
In spirit alike, but changed in name.
I see the phantoms of Earth and Air,
A thousand are foul where one is fair,
(But that ‘one’ is divine, and her blue eyes calm
Are shadowed by leaves of the branching palm,)
And I hear the yells of a million more,
Whose sins are all written in stripes and gore :—

There's one who the gem of his best friend stole,—
And a King half-hid in a beggar's soul,
And a Poet who lied for his earthly good,
And a Woman of glass, and a God of wood,
(Wrapped round like the idol-beast that treads
With murderous scorn on the Hindoos' heads)—

* * * * *

I see a Palace—enormous—bright,
Studded with stars like an August night ;
The pillars that prop it are based below,
But whence they come or whither they go
Who, with an eye like ours, shall know !—
The shafts are embossed and golden, and graven
With letters of Earth and Hell and Heaven,
(A terrible mixture,—like the speech
Of the Sea when it bursts on a stormy beach :)
There are discord—melody—music,—hung
Like beads on a rosary oddly strung,
And words of a mighty forgotten tongue :—
'There are lessons to curse and a few to bless,
And riddles beyond the Sphinx's guess ;
And folly, and passion, and proud despair,

And all moods of the mind are sculptured there :
—The shafts are of gold, and they run so high
That they pierce the floors of the far blue sky,
And a million of creatures, whose size is a span
Climb round and around them, and each is—man :
All toil, some rise, some hang in the air,
And some fall with a shriek in a terrible lair,
Which yawns like the pit of the damn'd, or a cave
Where the brutes of the wilderness hunger and rave.
Fierce flames are up-rising, and rain is descending,
And o'er all the cloud-black Heaven is bending,
And the insolent winds are unloos'd from their den,
To hiss their scorn in the ears of the men,
Who drop like leaves, when but few do hang
On the blight smitten boughs :—Hark ! a trumpet rang
Through my brain ; and, behold, all the pillars crack,
And the star-studded palace is gone to rack :
It totters—it falls—with a human scream
Like the whirlwind's cry.—'Tis—an empty dream.

A dream ?—what is it—a birth or death
Of thought ?—'Tis whatever the poet saith :

A figure (a prophecy) dark or dumb,
Yet breathing a tale of the vast 'to come,'—
A fable,—a fact,—a cloud unfurled
From all that was done in the last good world,
And in truth as alarming as Plato's fear
(Or hope) of that mighty embracing year,
Within whose perilous grasp old Time
Should return, pulled back by his locks sublime,
And the Earth should gape, and the urns spice-fed,
Should give up (just as they were) the dead.

I dream—I dream—I dream :—
A waking fancy now becomes my theme.
I dream of pleasures old,
And of the age of gold,
When every river ran a happy stream ;

Before "The Syrian" raged :
Before red wars were waged ;

Before a hero fought or Fame was born ;
 Before the stars were shamed,
 Or men each other blamed
For deeds the frowning night beheld in scorn.

And now—I see as in some magic glass
Radiant enchantments:—First, far streaming bright,
Dazzling the shining earth with looks of light,
A figure like a God: He seems to pass
 From Heaven to Heaven, and from star to star,
 Till all the depths and darkened worlds afar
Rise up apparell'd in his joyful ray ;
 And wheresoe'er he treads
 Pale planets rear their heads,
And wheresoe'er he smileth—lo ! 'tis day.

But on what lonely mountain bare and old
Sitt'st *thou* beyond the sun,—paternal king ?
Why look'st thou, with large eyes so blank and cold,
As though the eternal year were on the wing ?
 Why at thy feet are they, the Titan brood,
 Like brown leaves of the autumn strewed ?

In mute enormous anguish lo ! they lie :—
No wind nor sullen sound
That shakes the barren ground
Can stir them from their trance. Awake, or die !

The Sun now blazes overhead : Below,
A river filled with ruin and half hid,
But terrible as Ocean at his flow,
Rushes along :—Palace and pyramid
Gray with the spoils of years, and mighty towers
That cost the Titans (all) a thousand hours
Of toil to build them to the cloudy Heaven,
Are rent, and tumble in the stream,
With their dark masters, while a scream
Runs thro' the earth, as tho' its inmost heart was riven.

And thou—Imperial terror !—Eldest-born !
Hoary Saturnus !—thou whom Heaven and Earth
Flung from their rich embrace, as the dim morn
Sprang from the grave of night, a mingled birth,
Half light, half darkness, yet like both sublime,—
Awake ! Arise ! Else shall thou, ancient Time,

Father of many years, be swept away,
And no bright record left
That the young world wept
When thou the Patriarch sank before usurping day !

He falls, he falls ; His ancient reign is over :
And on his neck a golden chain is laid,
And on his eye an eye
Darts like the blinding sun ; and in his ears
Sounds like the morn, terrible harmonies,
Rage, as the ocean rages
Beneath the eclipsing moon.

Silence is gone : and Night,
Glittering with terror, for the first time bares
Her *star-bewildered face*, and strangely smiles ;
And the winds laugh aloud ; and every pore
Of the blue air stung with a radiant life
Drops sweets ; and nodding forests lose their gloom ;
And twilight caves are shining

Set round with splendours like the set of suns :
And Music (which had perish'd) is born again ;
And like a bird new-wakened in the night
Uttereth her liquid notes, from spangled streams
And fountains,—till the leaves are touched to tears ;
And every valley sinks writhing with joy ;
And every hill aspires,
Ambitious to behold a new born God.

Saturn alone (Heaven's king and Earth's) with scorn
Looks on the time ; and with impetuous strength
Tears his harmonious bonds and golden chains,
And spurning, with a shout, the obsequious ground,
Invades the shrinking air.
—He rises, like a ruin,
Loosen'd by earthquakes from its deep foundations,
And hung in the days of plague
O'er some bad city, whose wide streets are thronged
With millions, stained with death, yet fearing woe.
How, if he so descend ?—
He springs,—he rises :
His course is like the comet's, fierce and bright :—

So the death-hunted serpent, crowned with wrongs,
Ssprings from the reeds of Nile:—So that vast snake
Strong as a tempest, that lays waste whole lands,
Darts, like a wrath, from out his Asian haunts,
And gripes the groaning lion till he dies.

He rushes thro' the air : the sullen air
Avoids him, and his wings, out-spread in vain,
Flap on the void. His strength departs :—he falls.—
As some brave swimmer whom the waves o'ermatch
Looks far to land—in vain,
So doth the aged Saturn's starting eye
Glare on the faithless sky its red reproach,
Its first,—its last. The fiery Phœbus
Sheds all his ire on that unsheltered brain.
He falls ; and not a voice
From Earth or Heaven is heard to speak for *him* :
No tears (tho' false) are shed : no heart is touched
With human anguish for a God dethroned.

He falls,—he falls—he falls,
Ten thousand fathoms down,

And the dusky crown
Is stripped for ever from his kingly brow.
His son?—*His son is King!*
Hark!—the Heavens ring :
Jove is elected Lord of life and woe :
His thunders speak ; his lightnings come and go :
His pomps are all around ;
Bright light and mighty sound
Attend him, and his radiant armies flow
Like rivers round the throne ;
HE IS GOD ALONE.

And where is Saturn?—On what silent shore
Doth he lament his wrongs and old exile?
In what dull woods whereon no Summers smile,
And all the Springs (if any were) are o'er?
Where Autumn and her bounty are not known ;
Where Winter pineth for his icy crown,
And the long year, breathing one endless sigh,
Stripped of the seasons hath not learned to die?—

—Saturn the king is gone :—perhaps in vain

He howleth to the heedless winds his pain.

No matter :—Such great end

Is surely worth a friend :

The Father falls,—but, look ! the Son doth reign !

O Saturn, fallen king !

Older than the firmament :—Before the Sun,

Before the Moon, before the glittering Stars

Thou wast ;—and art thou gone !—

Oh ! could I with my verse

Stay thy chained ruin,

Strait I would rehearse,

Though my own undoing

Followed, as the night

Followeth the bier of the pale twilight.

But, ah ! in vain, in vain !

Down-smitten by the sun's

Rays, immortal pain

Through thy furrows runs,
Like the fierce quick lightning,
When the storm is brightening.

And tears, as from huge fountains
Where the Sea is nursed,
Spring,—and lo ! the mountains,
Moan until they burst :
The great throne that bore thee
Shrinks to dust before thee.

Every thing that ‘ *was*’
Pines its life away ;
So shall all things pass
Which have birth to-day :
What is joy or sorrow
But—To-day—To-morrow ?

Life shall re-assume
Its peculiar birth :
Though it seek the tomb,
It shall seek the earth

Again ; and like a star,
Or as angels are,
Winged with ethereal beauty fair and free,
Shall through finer regions flee,
More bright, more soft, more green ;
Than ever here were seen
In Tempe's valley or Idalian groves,
Yet there the Cretan doves
Sang to the silent branches without fear,
And not a voice was near
Save her's who for the boy Narcissus sighed,
And, too much loving, died.

Love in ethereal light cannot outrave
Its strength, nor perish from excess of scorn :
But, like the zephyr to the wild sea-wave,—
Like echo to sweet music,—like the morn,
Whose pearl-bright sorrow doth the leaves adorn,
It *giveth* strength and grace. Its boundless range
Is all the blue dominion of the sky ;
It cannot pass away ; it cannot change ;
But like the perfum'd ether spreads its power

O'er the celestial vales and azure hills,
And with immaculate passion stirs and fills
All hearts, while Beauty—the eternal dower
Of Heaven, grows brighter still thro' each transcendent
hour.

Here, on this dusty earth, perhaps the Spirit
Of Love may droop, or soil its radiant wings :
Perhaps a—something it may chance inherit
Of what is around :—and yet the bird that sings
In prison learneth a melodious strain,
And often its sweetest song is born of pain.
So, in the land of sorrows, Love may shine,
'Thro' clouds—thro' tears perhaps, yet still divine,
Divine as beauty—as the light of truth,
And fed with passion and immortal youth,
And music, like some white enchanted bird
In old times on Arabian waters heard.
Oh ! then Imagination was a God,
And on the world with radiant steps he trod,
And every leaf he touched, and every hue
He glanced on became bright, and all was true :

And still—as soft as fable, Nature sings
Still in the shadowy woods and haunted springs :
And birds at break of morn still wake the sun,
And some (more sweet) still chaunt when day is done ;
And some the night wind witch with amorous sighs :
Only the swan is mute—until it dies.

—No more—no more—no more.
The hour of dream is o'er ;
And troubles of the world bloom out anew ;
But youth—and sunny day—
And beauty—where are they ?—
The earth has lost its green ; the sky its blue.

No more with pastoral pipe
Shall I, when the year is ripe,
(Falling in golden showers, and odorous drops
Red as the ruby's light)
Solace the pale twilight :—
Alas ! the melancholy music stops.

In vain the reed is blown :
No sorrows save her own,
The watery Syrinx will allow to rise ;
But,— as tho' Pan still woo'd,
And she again (pursued)
Fled o'er the amorous shallows,—so she sighs.

She sighs—like winds at eve,
Like lovers' tongues that grieve,
Like tones—oh ! never to be heard again,
Like voices from the sea
Where the sea-maids be,
Like aught of pleasure with a touch of pain.

A more melodious tune
Never beneath the moon
Was uttered, since the Delphian girls were young,
And the chaste Dian, bright
With beauty and delight,
Lay listening on the mountains, while they sung.

A more entrancing song
Was never borne along
The ethereal sky, when at gray opening morn
The fiery horses rise,
Like victors from the skies,
Trampling the stars away till day is born.—

—Alas !—no more may I,
Pale Syrinx, sigh for sigh
Give thee :—Complaining not my song I cease.—
—A spirit came and led
My soul amongst the dead,
And vanish'd. What is left,—but silence—peace?—



TARTARUS.

A SKETCH.

**Dī, quibus imperium est animarum, Umbræque silentes,
Et Chaos, et Phlegethon, loca nocte tacentia late,
Sit mihi fas audita loqui ; sit, numine vestro,
Pandere res âlta terrâ et caligine mersas.**

TARTARUS.

The first region of Tartarus is seen. In the distance are the four rivers; and nearer, just visible through the gloom, are the monsters asleep. A SPIRIT of Death is watching.

Spirit.

He lingers. Is the Sybil's spell so weak?
Or doth the haunted darkness breed great fears,
Which shake his manhood?—Hark! our Furies howl,
Lock'd in Avernus, deep, lest their snak'd hair
Should hiss strange terror; and grim Charon lies
Palsied by charms, and dumb; and there the wild
Flame-breathing Hydra, and the brood of Dreams
(All chained to pillars of Tartarian black)
Lie still,—save some, let loose to point the path
Which skirts Cocytus' shore, and give the stranger
Welcome from Proserpine,—our Queen. Hark!—No:
'Tis but the lazy Styx, whose muttering waves
(Sadder than silence) to the populous strand
Talk till the ghosts are moved. Again?—Away,

It is the vexed flood of Acheron,
Scattering its broken billows, till the din
Touches the arched Hell ; and moans, beside
Its waters rising, discourse tales of sin,
And human pain, and hope which will not die.
Ho ! who art thou ?—the Moor ?

GUIOMAR *enters.*

Guim. The Sybil's friend.

Spirit. The Moor ?

Guim. The *Spaniard*, Spirit ; though descended
From the Miramolin, half,—the rest through veins
Which blushed to mix with Mauritanian fire.—
Look ! I have here a rare and glittering branch,
Plucked from an Indian mine, where once it grew
Dowried with precious fruits,—the emerald green,
And the flushed amethyst, white pearls, and rubies
Red as the dragon's blood, who watched (for Jove)
The fruit all gold in gardens far away.
Hesperian centinel !—

Spirit. You come to see—

Guim. I come to visit
Your kingdom, Spirit, where the ghosts abound ;—

To look upon your pale society.
Already have I o'ermatched the Sybil's art,
By darker spells that spotted the clear moon ;
And now I come to syllable my power
Here,—in your black domain. That hag—*She* caught
Her incantations from the dreaming winds,
Babblers of common tales : but *I* have words
The wealth of an Arabian wizard's brain,
Accents drawn from the thunder,—from eclipse ;
Interpretations of the rebel hills,
When Earth was in her anarchy ; from blasts
That blow hot death : From waves that kiss the clouds ;
From clouds that spit their spite out on gray hairs ;
From the dumb ice ; from rains and hurricane :—
Thus am I armed, dull Spirit ; and beside
With poisonous unguents which no man uncharmed
Can touch and die not ; and with drops, like gall,
Wrung from the adder when its hate was highest ;
Parricide tears ; and rich Egyptian dust
(Stol'n from a pyramid)—which once was flesh
And bore on 'ts swarthy brow a jagged crown.—
What more ?—

Spirit. I claim the word.

Guion. (*mutters a word*) Ha ! hearest thou ?—

Spirit. I obey.

Guion. Come, then : We'll look
Upon your monstrous boasts and giant lies,
And shadows made immortal by great pain,—
Death and the howling Titans, and proud kings
Who shook their heads at Heav'n, and beasts that cover
Acres of Hell,—insolent prodigies,
Whose fables cheat us into fear.

Spirit. Behold !—

(*The shadow of Typhon is seen.*)

What see'st thou ?—

Guion. I see the shadow of a dusky snake,
Curling its leagues of scale, and writhing *hither*,—
Away !—'tis dragon-headed, with bright eyes
Fiercer than fire.

Spirit. This was the famous son
Of Terra, who once scared the Gods from Heaven,
And planted terror on Olympian heights.
Begone !

Guion. 'Tis gone ; and from the oozing earth
A man comes upwards.

(The shadows of Tantalus and his children rise.)

Spirit. Ay,—this was the Lydian ;
(Pluto's dear offspring too)—the same who sate
At the Gods' golden tables, and drank life ;
But stole the ambrosian cheer and nectarous wine :
And so he fell from Heaven.

Guion. Hush those hoarse voices. Hark !

Spirit. They *will* be heard.

CHORUS, (*Furies.*)

Arise ! O waters, rise !
While we sing, and mock his eyes,
Touch his chin, and tempt his lips,
Quick !—and vanish ere he sips.
Let the fruit before his eyes
Wither as the shadow flies
At a touch, until he scream
Maddened at the hungry dream.

Guion. Why, this is mockery base enough for earth.
No more, no more. Methinks his pallid cheeks,

Lean and drawn inwards, move my pain. Away !
See, from his children how he turns his eyes,
Struck by the hissing scorn. Alas, great tears !

Spirit. Pass ; and come onwards thou,—Son of the
Winds !

Who married the Atlantéan Merope,—
Who broke immortal oaths,—who tried to chain
Death in thy palace——

(The Shade of Sysiphus is seen.)

Guiom. Ah ! See where he toils.

Hark ! how his sinews crack : and what a load
Of stone he struggles with—he strains—Away !
Look ! where it thunders down.

Spirit. 'Tis Sisyphus.

Guiom. Let the sad shadow go.

Spirit. 'Tis gone.

(It passes, and the Torment of Ixion appears.)

Guiom. Who's he,
That turns for ever on yon angry wheel ?
There —— ?

Spirit. The Thessalian ;—he who his friend decóyed
And burnt to dust ; and when great Jove took pity

Upon his pain (for he was scorn'd by men)
And raised him to blue heaven, and gave him to drink
Olympian wine, grew mad.

Guim. How mad?

Spirit. He looked
Lust on the airy Juno,—the sky queen,
And on her white breast fed his fiery eyes
Till sense forsook him. In mad ravishment
He clasped her——

Guim. O a brave villain! Clasp her? what?

Spirit. Her shape—a cloud it was, no more; and yet
Fairer than Iris when June rains are gone:
And thence was born the Centaur.

Guim. 'Tis enough.
One more, but for her name, (beautiful name!)
Agāve!

Spirit. Rise!—Arise, daughter of Cadmus!
Nurse of the son of Semele! (*She appears.*)

Guim. Is this
Agave?—Oh! where is her cruel eye?
Where is the flushing cheek,—the rage,—the lips
Stained black by Bacchanalian revelry?—

Delicat'st thing ! has story done thee wrong,
Flower of Hermione, and lied away
Thy whiteness ? Oh ! no purple drops are here :
Nothing, save beauty which might shame the skies,
And lustrous looks softer than starlight.—Hush !
She fades—she fades : a phantom then ?—She's gone.
Where is she gone,—oh ! where ?

CHORUS.

Into the air—into the air ;
Where the stricken shadows fly
Who must never face the sky.
To her endless tasks of woe
Sad Agave hies
Downwards as the plummet flies
Through the watery worlds below.

Guiom. Bid the scene alter. These pale sights
oppress me.

Spirit. What comes ?

Guiom. Oh ! perilous crowds :—By scores, and scores,—
Hundreds,—and thousands,—on each other's heels
Treading like madmen or swart idiots,
Shrieking and bellowing, some, some with their hands

Clasped on their hearts, some with fixed eyes, and teeth
Clenched like a vice.—Ha ! look !

Spirit. The mad Cassandra :—

And he who follows, clad in shining arms,
Was madder : he could drink, and fight, and conquer,
Beyond his fellows :—He,—who tears his beard,
Was yet most wise ; and he who, following close,
Snarls like a hound and spits upon the wind,
Was a proud fool,—no sage.

Guim. Diogenes !

A beggar in his drink were better. Ha !
Onwards comes a blind man with hoary hairs,
By a fair child attended.

Spirit. Antigone.

Guim. Matchless Antigone !
Even in Hell thy fame is beautiful.
Why is she here ?

Spirit. She feels no pain ; but lives
Near to her father, here, who else would pine
Though in Elysium.

Guim. 'Tis a gracious doom.
Minos hath judged thee well. But who is this ?

(*The shadow of Cæsar comes.*)

Methinks I see a bald and laurell'd crown,
And fierce sad eyes beneath it.

Spirit. This was he
Worshipped the dark Bellona. When he trod
Past the red river with ambitious step
Rome, his great country, fell.

Guion. Ha!—Few like he
Honoured the purple, and with sword and pen
Writ their so proud renown. A sadness lies
In his sunk eye, white lips, and temples pale :
Is it remorse ?

Spirit. Despair.

Guion. He never knew
The coward pain on earth ; but your foul air
Engenders the bad passions,—craft and fear.

Spirit. He is but what he was. Your earth hath
bounds
Wide enough for all passions. Like great Hell
Mounting Ambition has dethroned your Gods,
(Your Gods of dust) and laid them prostrate,—thus.
Pass to thy home.

(*The shadow fades.*)

Thou musest, Guiomar—

Thy thoughts are away,—on earth.

Guiom. Give me to see

Adramalech,—my father's slave, who taught me
First how to grasp a lance; and my brown cheek
(Then scorch'd by fifteen summers) smoothed in praise
Whenever I struck the ring. He was a fellow
Fit to unlearn the Gods. Throat-deep in sin,
He led me with him, through the frantic dance
And the red revel.—As the Trojan once
Waked Palinurus from his dream of death,
And bade him tell why he, a pilot sage,
Tumbled amongst the billows,—so will I
Ungrave the swarthy Moor.

Spirit. Arise, arise!

(A shadow rises.)

Guiom. Ay,—this is he: Yet his rich colour's gone.
And he'd a speaking eye,—but these are dumb.
Sorrow has touch'd him, here, perhaps despair.
Speak! how is 't with thee now, Adramalech?
Was there provided *no* Elysian home
For thee, old master,—none?

Adram. None, Guiomar.

Guiom. What hast thou done for this?

Adram. Oh ! spare me, spare me.

Guiom. Speak ! what hast done ? Hast made insolent love

To the black queen ?—no matter ; thou 'rt forgiv'n.

Adram. Oh ! ask me not. I slew—

Guiom. Be dumb. A horror

Numbs me :—'Tis but a guess,—but such a guess !

Adramelech !—slavish Adramelech,

Whom my great father spared from stripes and chains !

Adram. My kin had ransomed me, but that he chose
To bury my life—

Guiom. Thou liest, base bloody slave :
He saved thee, cherished thee.

Adram. He gave me gold,
But kept back freedom : Then I swore to cast
Vengeance upon him :—Thee, his son, I trained
To devilish arts, and turned thy blood to sin ;
Thy thoughts to wishes which good men abhor ;
Thy love to lust ; thy hopes to unbelief ;
And him—I murdered.

Spirit. Go.

(*The shadow fades.*)

Guiom. Begone ! Fine spirit,
Lend me thy fire—thy fire. Where is my sword ?
Gone ! then may the sharp pangs——

Spirit. His doom is writ ;
Burnt on the iron books, as firm as fate.

Guiom. O murderous villain !—

Spirit. Look ! I change the scene.
Awake, bold Guiomar. Lo ! we have sights
Shall shame thy Spanish boasts. Look up !

Guiom. I scarce can look.—What is 't ?—
I see a city which some moaning flood
Clasps in its fretful arms : and now—words, like
The accents of a drowning swimmer's tongue,
Gurgle into mine ear, and stifled shrieks
Seem born amidst the billows and then die.

Spirit. List ! In this pool, (upon whose unsunn'd
waves
The city of Death is built, a haunted isle,)
The spirits of the damned are, doomed to waste

An age. Its troubled waters, which no wind
Ever did fawn on, are stirred up by groans,
And struggling wretches whom the torment stings.
Look ! The white foam thou see'st—is theirs.

Guion. Alas !

Spirit. Pity not, thou whose art darkens the moon.
Did not the crafty Sybil teach thy soul
Courage as well as truth ?

Guion. I tremble not :
But on my human ears some sounds will fall,
Which sting me into pity. 'Tis the curse
Of my compassion that it meets with scorn.
Swear thou some monstrous oath and bid it die !—
Methinks my soul, which now was bound about
By dauntless strength, shrinks in this evil air.
Look ! how the blasted flowers and curling shrubs
Droop their black heads ; and blood-red poppies weep,
And horrid drops stand like Maremma dew
Upon the sweating boughs, and from huge roots,
(Crook'd like a vulture's claw) the poison runs.
I tread on ashes—Faithless, faithless Hell !

Give forth your fragrance ! Bid your winds blow out !
Rain balm on me, and in my faint ears pour
Sidonian music, and the moonlit songs
Of Syria,—till I sleep. If gums be here,
Fume the dull ether with their sweets, and let
Rise incense,—though to Heaven.

O Granada !

Where are your mountains now, where are your green
Forests and dawning slopes, on which the day
Kisses his pearly food and odorous dew ?
O Granada, my country ! in whose arms
Sleeps the rich blessing that once filled my life
With love, (such love !)—upon what frightful shore
Am I forsaken ?—

Spirit. Droop not, Guiomar.

Still hast thou much to see in these dark realms.—
Thou hast adopted us and our pale race.
We're brothers ; think on that. For the base earth—
Forget it.

Guiom. Ha !—I see a man who flies,
And one who like a Fury follows him.

Spirit. That is a Dream.

Guiom. No more ?

Spirit. What would'st thou more ?

Spirit to spirit is as flesh to flesh.

His torment is as great as theirs whose backs

Are cut by the knotted scourge ; and he thou see'st,

Who by yon flame-like vapour wastes for days,

Suffers as martyrs do, when blood-fed crowds

Choke up the streets of Seville. There, look there !

Shadows are touched by pity. They but dream

Of that fierce acting which now mocks thine eyes,

And yet they weep. The tears of Spain are hoarded :

But these—ha, ha, ha—

Guiom. Stop thy hollow laugh :

It rings like a death-peal through me.—Why rejoice

That the dull Spaniards feed thy God with blood ?

Spirit. They feed the fools who sway them, priests
and kings.

Guiom. Rail not, infernal ! Though the lazy blood
Of the gross prelate and the filthy monk

Stagnate, unless 'tis moved by shrieks and tears,

The time *shall* come—I *see* a glorious time,

When the weak nursling, who hath fed on groans

From his red cradle up, no more shall staunch
His drivelling folly with the mourner's hair ;
Nor the fine patriot's spirit be trod to dust.
Ha ! look ! — what scarlet shame steals along,—
there ?

Spirit. It is the Cardinal — —.

Guim. Ho, ho ! Justice has caught
A saint at last. But where are all your kings ?

Spirit. They sleep,—and dream,
Bound down to fiery beds by golden chains.
We pay due honour here.

Guim. Hast *thou* no king ?

Spirit. Ay,—if thou darest behold.

Guim. I dare.

Spirit. Then, fly—
Shadows and spirits ; and ye towers cloud-built
Shake into air ! Open your haunted gates
Palace of the great Death ! Torments and Pains,
Who rack the body, and make mad the mind,
Appear, appear ! And thou, by whose great will
I am, Prince of the Grave ! whom shape or space
Never encompassed, but through Earth and Air

And the orb'd stars dost reign, and here in Hell,
Appear!—

Now, Spaniard, brace thy heart, and gaze!

Guion. I seem to look on
A shapeless cloud;—yet something mocks my sight
Behind. And now, methinks, uprise two thrones,
And from the back of one out-flames a star;
O'er that a phosphor glory hangs,—a crown,
All studded like Orion's blazing belt:
'Tis Lucifer's,—I know 't:—the other's hid,
Clouded,—yet, midst the gloom, a brutish shape
(Like a shrunk mummy) sits. Is *he* your king?

Spirit. Be patient: thou shalt see. Meanwhile,
look here.

Guion. Ha! On each side,—in ranks, like courtiers
drawn,

Before some war-propped monarch, stand fierce Shapes.

Spirit. Mark me: Yon figure with the adder's tongue
And tiger-headed, is the Pain whose touch
Rages like fire: That thin shape, pale as stone,
Is Palsy: that—Despair, with cold blank eyes;
And he who shakes is Ague, hand in hand

With the flush'd Fever and blue Pestilence ;
And there, swell'n like a ball, the Dropsy lies.
That—that is Madness.

Guiom. Which ?

Spirit. That beast, whose brain
Is stung by hornets, till he mocks the moon
(Far off) with howling. Hark ! dost thou not hear
How the wolf laughs ?

Guiom. A shuddering sound. No more.

Spirit. How ! Dost thou tremble ere thy time be come ?

Guiomar !

Guiom. My Lord !

Spirit. Ha, ha ! thy lord is here.

Guiom. I do not hear your Furies. Bid them howl.
Methinks their voices, though so fierce of late,
Would soothe me.

Spirit. Dost thou fear ?—The ground thou tread'st
Is holy. In the presence of great Death
None come, save these (his court,) and I who hunt
Myriads before him ;—for his food is flesh.

Guiom. Let's go. Stand thou aside, insolent slave !
I'll force my path.

Spirit. By *me*?—Look well upon me.

Guion. Thou—thou art changing: Ha!
Thy bulk is swelling to a giant's size,—
And thy face blackens,—Ah! thou'rt Death?

Spirit. I am his minister. Once,—when I drank
Numidian air, I was a prince, anointed,
Crown'd, worshipp'd like a Fear. Thousands of slaves
Bent at my foot-stool, and I built up towers,
And razed great hills, and cut deep lakes that chained
Sea unto sea. I founded pyramids,
Which shook, when thunder spake, their pointed heads
At Heaven, and through the cloudy midnight read
Black secrets, and did act alarming spells,
Ay, tempted the bright stars (they waned) and
dragged

A planet from its path, which rushed aside
Flashing and flaming, ruining orbs and worlds,—
I did it;—but the pale Sickness bowed my soul,
And I, who was adored and called a God,
Felt myself fading:—then I prayed to Death
To linger,—and he lingered: while I swore
To yield to him my immortality,

If that I was immortal,—and he smiled ;
And he agreed,—and lo ! I am his slave.

Guiom. A potent slave : alas !—Now let us go.
Ha !—look ! The shadows fly—the Pains—they fade.
They are not real !

Spirit. Nothing is real, save Death.

Guiom. And thou— ?

Spirit. I am the frenzy of thy brain,
A mockery :—See !

Guiom. Thou fadest—Stay !—*Diabolus !*
Thou cheater—Ha ! what storms are these let loose ?
What raging ! Hush !—I hear sounds like a whirlwind
Sweeping along ; and oaths that drown the thunder ;
And the gloom trembles where the lightning looks ;
And the parch'd ground doth quiver as I tread.
Spirit !—He's gone : and all are gone—save ONE
Curtained behind yon cloud.—False Spirit !—Ha !
Look at his fiery track ! How he bestrides
The hurricane, and through the thick air darts
Back his bright scorn ! Hush !—Hark !—the Horror
laughs.

A VOICE *is heard.*

Guiomar !

Guiom. Ha ! who whispers !

VOICE. *Guiomar !—*

Be ready ! Thou hast earned immortal life .

And I, thy Lord, expect thee.

Guiom. Heav'n !

VOICE. *Prepare !—*

Thy home is made : Thy labours are appointed :

Thy name is writ amongst my pomp of slaves.

BEHOLD ! *I bid thee welcome, Death, thy king !*

(The figure of DEATH is seen.)

Guiom. Ha ! Ghastly Phantasm !—Turn thy pallid
leer

Away : it sickens me. Methinks I stand

Full in the leopard's eye :—What arrowy light

He shoots out—Ha ! Begone, thou blasting dream !

Touch me not—come not—Ah ! my limbs are locked.

(The arrow strikes him as the figure fades.)

Oh !—'Tis a wintry bolt,—colder than frost :

But rankling,—rankling. Oh !— — Who laughs above ?—

I hear thee, spiteful Spirit : and I come.
Down to the lower graves, o'er-scaled by crime,
I go, to make thee mirth,—leaving for aye
This strange and melancholy wilderness.— —
From the rich Spain I came, (a bright blue air)
To look upon these heaths and sunless shores,
With no companion :—but a wizard's step
Must stop not, till it treads the lowest depths.
Oh ! how I dreamed that I might spread my name
(Once—once !) amongst a wide posterity ;
And build up a renown, like lasting brass ;
And be hereafter told of, as a man
Who sold his birthright (pleasure) for great fame—
And now I die,—wither'd : yet will I die
Bravely,—for so I lived.

Infernal Halls !

Ye everlasting halls of Grief and Shame !
Where are your crowds, your shapes, your wild array
Of dæmons, and Tartarian chivalry ?
Where are your Gods,—crown'd Sin and the gaunt
Death,
To herald me?—I claim all sovereign pomp.

For to your cloud-black kingdoms never came
A mightier than to-day.—Ha! look!—I see
A flame of horsemen rush against the wind;
And bony crowds pass by with clattering feet;
Hydras and giants, and wide-gaping snakes;
And hissing dogs, and vultures that drop blood;
And the wild women with their crawling hair,—
Avaunt!—and look! the enormous Briareus
Comes, and foul Typhon drags his scaly train
Here,—*here!*—Away!—Dash down your burning rain!
Stifle me,—slay me,—quick!— (*he falls.*)

—O Lucifer!

Prince of the morning, to thy radiant arms
Take me, for now I die. To *thee*—(who wast
Banished from all the Heavens to tread dark Hell)
Star of a stormy world! alone I yield.
If there be pity left 'midst thy despair,
Pity me. I have erred—and dared—like thee.
Ambition was my God;—and it was thine.
Pity me—fallen — — fallen. (*Dies.*)

THE GENEALOGISTS.

A FRAGMENT.



TO THOMAS HOOD, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR,

I offer this fragment to you ; partly because you are a lover of the mirthful, as well as of the serious ; but principally because I am anxious to incite you, by this open acknowledgment of your rare poetical powers, to exercise them for the gratification of the public.

I would not be thought forward in thus becoming the herald of your reputation ; but I am nevertheless desirous of saying (what I have never before said to you) that believing your poetical faculty to be equal to very high accomplishment, I shall venture, in case you enrol your name amongst the living poets, to look forward with confidence to your complete success.

I am

Very sincerely yours,

B. C.



THE GENEALOGISTS.

A FRAGMENT.

I.

Two China-men, some thousand years ago,
Lived by, on, at, or near the Yellow River : .
The name of one was Phang, and t'other's Foh,
And both (but 'twas in China) were deemed clever :
Some said, indeed, that Phang was rather slow,
Yet sure to do his best in each endeavour :
Others averred that Foh was like the sun,
(Not bright, but quick)—you wished?—your wish was
done.

II.

Now, Phang—(the slow man) was by taste and trade
A joiner, making chairs, stools, tools, and all
Those things ; and Foh an artist, ready made,
Who painted doors and pictures, great and small,
Signs, symbols, likenesses, both man and maid,
Making the crooked straight, the little tall :
He painted quick, and cheap, and didn't cozen,
And always gave in thirteen to the dozen.

III.

Phang had an only child,—a youth—a son ;
Not like the Chinese things we see in town,
Poor wandering drones, on whom a frightful sun
Has cast its common kitchen colours down ;
But slim, genteel, tho' not averse to fun,
And o'er his back a tail hung half-way down.
He was a beau, in short ; his face was fair,
And quite uncopper'd, which is curious there.

IV.

Copper 's an odious colour—for a face :
It courts (but never answers) observation ;
Tho' I can't say that it reflects disgrace
As is supposed by some more serious nation :
I only mean, one might supply its place
(Suiting our age, of course, or the occasion)
With white or carmine, or some other hue,
Pink, brown, or anything, in short,—but blue.

V.

Blue—but I must not wander from my track :
I left off with, I think, Phang's ' only child,'
A hero with a tail half down his back,
At which the ladies of his country smiled,
Sighed, furred their fans, unfurled, and made 'em crack:—
(The pretty souls are easily beguiled :
A tail in China, and a sash and sabre
Here, save young gentlemen a world of labour.)

VI.

The name of this Adonis was—but reader,
You must not think the East and West the same :
There Love is led, and here he is a leader ;
Here beauty is a boast, and there a blame ;
In England with warm sighs, wild words we feed her ;
In China they prefer her cold and tame.
By this, I mean to say—the Chinese notion
Differs from ours on this side of the ocean.

VII.

The name of this Adonis was—Chang-ho,
Only sixteen, yet he was quite a man :
He loved the daughter of the painter Foh,
And talk'd—(that is, as well as dandies can ;
Their talk at best is trashy, and below
Man's level,—reaching but the blockhead's span.)
He talked as lover should who love discloses,
Likening her neck to snow, her lips to roses.

VIII.

They met in secret. Through the azure hours
Of night they changed soft vows and kisses sweet ;
And swore by all the heavenly (Chinese) powers,
They *would*, upon the feast of lanthorns, meet :—
(Their lanthorns, by the bye, are not like ours,
But made of paper, oil'd, and very neat :
The feast is like our holy annual dinners,
Frequented equally by saints and sinners.)

IX.

They met upon the feast of Lanthorns,—pale
As possible (in China) looked the maid :
Chang-ho, in yellow boots and plaited tail,
Met her, half-fond and more than half afraid.
The lady who came first began to rail ;
(And ladies, as we well know, *can* upbraid) :
On which Chang-ho swore out, by Fum and Fo-am !
He wished to Gad, that he had stayed at home.

X.

This led to some discussion :—How it ended
I leave all folks who know the sex to guess.
He kissed her,—once ; she vowed she was offended :
Another,—she was angry still,—but less.
He then said that he loved ; but, *if* she blended
Such acids with her sweets, why she *must* bless
Some *happier* man—(Our phrases are erratic—
Erroneous I should say—when we're emphatic.)

XI.

—They met upon the feast of Lanthorns. Love !
In *thy* dominion are not lovers' eyes
Enough to guide them ?—can they elsewhere rove
Save to each others arms ?—Old sacrifice !
(Of time and lanthorns) is not Heaven above
'Shamed of its lustre by thy lights and lies,—
Thy scandals,—wonderings,—about Fum and Ho,
And all thy stupid wooden kings below ?—

XII.

I hate all folly,—fuss: I hate pretence
'Bout 'honour,' 'heart,' and 'gentlemen,' and 'station,'—
And all that sort of thing. I hate that men's
Poor noughts should thus be thrust on observation:—
For me, I don't believe 'em—(no offence!)
Better a bit for all such protestation.
I think that men are bad, and women good,
And both—I mean in China, made of wood.

XIII.

Tho' here I may be wrong: the wood may be
But in the head; the body may be pliant,
And flesh,—it must be so, and pretty free,
Else how could Chinese lawyer round his client
Twist (while a ducat 's there) his gripe, and be
Like Hercules about the earth-born giant?
How could they dye cups,—saucers,—or paint stucco?
Or pick our sailors' pockets of tobacco?

XIV.

Yet now my logic's bad :—the thing is plain :—
I've drawn a false conclusion :—I confess it.
This owning costs me to be sure some pain ;
Tho' none perhaps but modest men would guess it ;
And yet the fault of which I here complain,
Might have been hidden, had I chose to dress it
In looser words, and made a large conclusion ;—
But I forgot the thing in my confusion.

XV.

But to return ;— and, now I think on't, I
Have quite forgotten to describe the lady :
Her name was Fohi, a brunette, and nigh
A black ; her eyelashes were long and shady ;
And 'neath them did she peer—prim, shrewish, sly :—
And did Chang-ho know this ?—Why I'm afraid he
Did not : for Fohi seemed as she had twice his
Small stock of virtue, but without his vices.

XVI.

Her little feet, were cabined and confined
In swathes of linen, fine, and white, and thin ;
And as her feet were prisoned so her mind,
Her studies ending where our girls' begin.
She knew a few words, such as 'Men', 'Mankind',
'Love', 'beauty', 'tea', 'toys', 'virtue', 'woman', 'sin':
But nothing more. Her looks were human faces:
She read, and put them in their proper places.

XVII.

Midst others came Chang-ho's—a blank ; without
A single letter upon any page :
And why 'twas ever made might cause some doubt.
I certainly might guess ;—I might engage
To give the depth, perhaps, of any lout,
Beau, beast, or blockhead, with unerring guage :
But after all 'twould be like some disaster
Of birth, or wood-cut by a German master.

XVIII.

And what is that?—what's any night mare worth,
Except by Fuseli?—A leg of veal,
A ham, a pig, a pudding ('neath the girth)
Such things, and better, to our sleep reveal:
Some are of hell, 'tis said, and some of earth,
And some are like—(for why should I conceal
The fact?)—our friends; who ride us in the dark,
And spur us thro' the day with some remark.

XIX

Whate'er Chang-ho and Fohi were, is not
Our task. They loved—or thought—or said they did;
They kissed, and swore to share each other's lot,
And do whatever not their parents bid:
They vowed they wouldn't have a secret thought,
And then, as usual, all their secrets hid.
In fine, Chang-ho declared he'd manage so
As soon to get the full consent from Foh.

XX.

But Foh, though wild and hasty in some things,
Thought much of birth, as we shall perceive soon ;
(Like German barons, or dull Spanish kings,
Who think that high birth is a heavenly boon :)
And— for some folly to the wisest clings—
Traced, as he said, his fathers to the moon ;
And much of her bright madness *could* one trace,—
Tho' really not her beauty, in his face.

XXI.

Foh's face was large, coarse, hard, and squarely cut ;
His red-brown cheeks like pears that housewives bake ;
And through his brow a wrinkle like a rut
Ran, and beneath, two eyes—like what the snake
Shows when its prey is near, half-ope, half-shut,
Twinkled,—or like a young star just awake :
His ears were wide : his beard was long : His tail !—
But no—I wont attempt it.—I *must* fail.

XXII.

I'll paint his mind—his soul ; for I suppose
They have those things in China as in Britain.
'They've eyes, ears, mouth, and something like a nose,
And a language bigger than was ever written ;
Whether it has much wisdom in't, God knows !
Or freedom,—for no poor wretch e'er was smitten
Enough to learn :—We'll grant 'em wise and free ;
Altho' I chiefly know them by—their tea.

XXIII.

His mind was like a windmill ; round and round
It went—and went—and went, from day to day,
And never reached the sky nor touched the ground,
But folly-blown was tossed about, mid-way,
Or else amid a cloud of projects bound :
And so he lived,—(not wisely, by the way,)—
A bubble, or a blow-ball,—fashion,—fame,
So they were idle all, were all the same.

XXIV.

Constant to nothing but the moon, and then
Tracking her course—‘*his*’ course I should say, rather,
For Foh believed the planets all were men,
And that the moon, in fact, was his own father,
Although but little of the ‘where’ and ‘when’
Could possibly be known, by which to gather
So strange a notion,—(but I before said
That he *had* curious notions on that head.)

XXV.

—Thou huntress, who upon cerulean plains
Followest the stars, and with cold arrows bright
Dost pierce the green earth tho’ it ne’er complains,
Because it worshippeth thy beauty. Night!
See how a beggar, here, thy sex arraigns.
Are all the poets wrong, and he aright?
Sweet Dian, art thou wronged by painter Foh?
Give me a speedy answer;—‘yes’ or ‘no?’—

XXVI.

—These goddesses in truth are somewhat odd:—

I waited for an answer full a minute.

I've half a mind to ask her brother god:

He *has* an ear, if I could hope to win it.

I'm told some poets in his house have trod:

I wonder whether there 's a parlour in it—

I wonder where he dines,—I wonder whether

He sits or stands,—or eats and drinks together;

XXVII.

I wonder—no: I'll wonder nothing more

At aught above the moon or aught that 's under;

Unless it be, standing on some wild shore,

To mark the curling billows burst in thunder,

Or hear the burning mountain howl and roar

As though 'twould split its own fierce heart asunder,

While far below the ashes crack and burn,

Precisely where you came,—and must return.

XXVIII.

That trembling of the ground beneath one's feet,
As tho' 'twould swallow all in its red fury,
Is terrible; 'twould stretch a nerve of steel,
To be thus buried without judge or jury :
The thing is not fictitious, Sir, but real,
A truth, a fact, and this I do assure you :
I learnt it (for I own I'm no unraveller
Of Nature's secrets) from a friend—a traveller.

XXIX.

This traveller (whom I know, and know no coward)
A short time since went up the flaming cone,
O'er dust, and lava rocks, and rivers dowered
With death, and on the summit lay alone
Midst the black ashes, whilst the crater showered
Its wrath, and there he heard the mountain groan,
And bellow like a creature racked with pain,
And sigh and moan like one who grieves in vain.

XXX.

Oh ! that Vesuvian beast—whose mouth is full
Of fire, whose breath is like the furnace blast ;
What was the Ilian horse, or what the bull
(The brazen horror) that Perillus cast ;
What is the kraken's splash, or the strange dull
Cry of the crocodile when Nile has past
By with his floods and left his slimy veins
Bare to the—thing (what is it ?) that complains !

XXXI.

It utters its red shouts, and all the shores
And hills and plains—the vallies—the tost ocean,
Shake like a wild stag when the lion roars ;
And mighty forests totter in their emotion :
The shuddering billow lifts its head and pours
Its white strength out,—as tho' it had no notion
Whither it went, nor care :—the vast noise drowns
The laugh of cities, and the strife of towns.

XXXII.

Slowly and slowly a bright river runs
Down the dark mountain's side, and takes its way—
Companioned by quick shocks like minute guns,
To where a little village lies,—or lay,
Till at the last, light like a thousand suns
Singes the wind, and bursts abroad like day
Trebled, thrice trebled—a hundred times—In brief
Beyond all calculation or belief.

XXXIII.

And still the river runs, and still the ground
Shakes as in travail; and the vineyard leaves
Grow black and wither with a crackling sound,
And here and there some cottage upward heaves
Itself and falls; and nought is heard around
But cries of women, and the curse of thieves,
Who amidst plagues and earthquakes always plunder.
(—How they can pilfer then to me 's a wonder!)

XXXIV.

Hark ! to those noises,—like the rush of cars
And lashing thongs, and countless rattling wheels,
As though deep earth were shook by ruinous wars
Within, while every flaring blast reveals
Bubbles all o'er the sea as thick as stars,
And wide-rent chasms yawn till the sick sense reels,
And rivers are sucked in, and marshes rise,—
And still the cloudless blue is in the skies.

XXXV.

But now Ocean begins to roar :—Its deeps
(Hitherto hid) are opened, and light fills
The caverns where the lazy sea-horse sleeps,
Who startled from his trance comes up and swills
Enormous waves in fear,—the dolphin leaps
Out of his element, and from the hills
The beasts run howling, while the darkened sun
Frowns as though Earth had lost and Hell had won.

XXXVI.

—And still the river runs. At last it stops,
Huddled and massed, against some fence or wall,
Piling its strength until the ruin drops,
And then another, and then others fall,
Then gardens, houses, trees, the blushing crops
Of grapes, and corn ; for nothing seems to pall
The appetite of fire, until it hies
Into the hissing sea,—and there it dies.

XXXVII.

But to resume—for really after all it
Will never do and cannot be defended,
This—this digressing, or whate'er you call it,
Where foreign stuff with homespun thus is blended ;
There may, and will, and must, some ill befall it,
Unless the system be soon dropped and ended :
If it go on there'll soon be, (there the bore is,)
No middle, and what's worse, no end to stories.

XXXVIII.

So to resume—O beauty ! O the light,
The love of women when they 're true—and young !
Their smile 's like morning and their eyes like night !
And that ambrosian bloom about them flung,
Rich as a rosy sunset, when the light
Is passing, and the vesper bell has rung
'Mongst the white Alps !—(the hue I mean is rose,
A blush—but pink, as every body knows.)

XXXIX.

What is there like sweet women,—like their bloom,
Their necks outshaming the white dove's in whiteness,
Their small words hallowed by such fine perfume,
And their eyes flashing forth such fearful brightness
As might the heaviest blockhead well illumine,
And make him tread like Zephyr in his lightness,
Their look, their lips, their clasp—Oh ! thrilling touch,
Soft as—but really, I shall say too much.

XL.

So I'll return to Foh:—Well, Foh was proud :
Not of his pallets, nor his paintings, no :
Such pride was poor, he said,—(This was aloud,
And therefore somewhat odd that I should know,
For secrets are the things to catch the crowd,
And a whisper travels miles where nought would go,
Save but a lie:—*that* beats it by some perches:
I've heard it tried in playhouses and churches.)

XII.

Yes, he was proud:—‘ My only daughter,’ said he,
‘ My Fohi, my sweet darling,’ (here he wept)
‘ I hope to Ho’ (which means to Gad) ‘ you’re steady :
‘ For if not,—and some tales have hither crept,—
‘ Your friends have whispered—yes, I know they’re ready
‘ To waken stories that had better slept—
‘ I know all that, my darling:—but I know,
‘ That if you wed Phang’s son my name’s not Foh.’

* * * * *

Oh ! Fohi, gentle Fohi,— art thou bowed
By misery,— mad,—distract,—a broken flower ?
A China-aster covered by a cloud ?
Thy vapours—did they pass in sigh and shower ?
Thy anger—was it long and rather loud ?
Thy love—a taper lit to last an hour ?—
Blown to and fro by sobs, and snuffed by doubt,
And damped by scorn,—it hissed and then went out.

LII.

And when 'twas dead, and when her grief was ended,
(Some fifteen minutes, by the Pekin clocks,
It ran away in tears) like one offended
By what had given her heart such shocking shocks,
She turned to spite from sorrow, and so blended
Her self-reprovings with such merry mocks,
That some believed she feigned, and some that strong
Passion had made her mad,—but they were wrong.

LIII.

She was but (what girls are too often)—fickle ;
Easily moved without or with a reason.—
Oh ! would ye thrive, ye desperate lovers, tickle
Your mistress' vanity, and in due season
Water your words with tears ; but let the sickle
Spare the gaunt folly-heads, and by degrees on
You'll get high as her heart,—that crockery shelf,
And there find fifty figures like yourself :

LIV.

A shepherd, with his crook half-bent (through age) ;
An Alderman in liquor from Portsoken,
A soldier with his breast-plate crack'd;—a Sage
Who turns his leaves in vain for some love-token ;
A dandy, ' formed,' as bards say, ' to engage,'
Mending his manners while his bones are broken ;
A dwarf, in body under height, and blind ;
An officer of sappers—under mind :

LV.

There may be seen the miser, sad but sly,
Letting his yellow gods at discount go,
(Coin for bare kisses); and the poet shy
Turning his gold to love, his notes to woe;
The high priest with the tenth pig o' the sty;
His amorous notions can no farther go;
If he succeeds, 'tis well—the pig's forsaken,
And if he fails, at least 'he saves his bacon.'

LVI.

Fohi had lovers, though, 'she never told
Her love, ' to any, save the joiner's son,
To whom she languished to be joined of old;
And now she called them over, one by one,
How she made sad the gay, and tamed the bold,
And with the gamester played at hearts and won;
And conquered cannoneers with bead-black glances;
And mowed down crops (of fools) at routs and dances.

LVII.

Which should she choose?—Duke Han she feared had
pride,

And though he flattered well, he might not wed :

Old Thong was palsy-struck from side to side,

And clumsy country Ching-ti *too* ill-bred :

The shaking Ho-ang she could not abide—

That very Mandarin from heel to 'head,

That thing, patch'd, painted, made of cork and wire,

Old (and almost as ugly) as her sire.

*	*	*	*	*	*
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MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

BABYLON,

WITH

THE FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR.

MANY a perilous age hath gone,
Since the walls of Babylon
Chained the broad Euphrates' tide,—
(Which the great king in his pride
Turned, and drained its channel bare)—
Since the Towers of Belus square
(Where the solid gates were hung
That on brazen hinges swung)
Mountain sized, arose so high
That their daring shocked the sky.

Famous city of the earth,
What magician gave thee birth?—
What great prince of sky or air
Built thy floating gardens fair?

—Thee the mighty hunter founded :
Thee the star-wise king surrounded
With thy mural girdle thick
Of the black bitumen brick,—
Belus, who was Jove, the God :
He who each bright evening trod
On thy marble streets, and came
Downwards like a glancing flame,
Love-allured, as fables tell.
But the last who loved thee well
Was the king whose amorous pride
(All to please his Median bride)
Fenced thee round and round so fast,
That, while the crumbling earth should last,
Thou, he thought, should be, and Time
Should not spoil thy look sublime.

He is gone, whose spirit spoke
To him in a golden dream :
He who saw the future gleam
On the present, and awoke
Troubled in his princely mind,

And bade his magicians blind
From their eyelids strip the scale,
And translate his hidden tale :—
He is gone : but ere he died,
He was tumbled from his pride,
From his Babylonian throne,
And cast out to feed alone,
Like the wild ox and the ass,
Seven years on the sprinkled grass.
—*He* is dead : his impious deeds
Are on the brass : but who succeeds ?

Over Babylon's sandy plains
BELSHAZZAR the Assyrian reigns.
A thousand Lords at his kingly call
Have met to feast in a spacious hall,
And all the imperial boards are spread,
With dainties whereon the monarch fed,—
Rich cates and floods of the purple grape :
And many a dancer's serpent shape
Steals slowly upon their amorous sights,
Or glances beneath the flaunting lights :

And fountains throw up their silver spray,—
And cymbals clash,—and the trumpets bray
Till the sounds in the arched roof are hung ;
And words from the winding horn are flung :
And still the carved cups go round,
And revel and mirth and wine abound.

But Night has o'ertaken the fading Day ;
And Music has raged her soul away :
The light in the Bacchanal's eye is dim ;
And faint is the Georgian's wild love-hymn.
“ *Bring forth*”—(on a sudden spoke the king,
And hushed were the lords loud-rioting,)—
“ *Bring forth the vessels of silver and gold,
Which Nebuchadnezzar, my sire, of old
Ravished from proud Jerusalem ;
And we and our Queens will drink from them.*”
And the vessels are brought, of silver and gold,
Of stone, and of brass, and of iron old,
And of wood, whose sides like a bright gem shine,
And their mouths are all filled with the sparkling wine.
Hark !—the king has proclaimed with a stately nod,

“ Let a health be drank out unto Baal, the God.”—
They shout and they drink :—but the music moans,
And hushed are the reveller’s loudest tones :
For a hand comes forth, and ’tis seen by all
To write strange words on the plastered wall !
—The mirth is over;—the soft Greek flute
And the voices of women are low—are mute :
The Bacchanals’ eyes are all staring wide :
And where’s the Assyrian’s pomp of pride ?—
—That night the monarch was stung to pain.
That night Belshazzar, the king, was slain!—

—Many a silent age the prow
Of untiring Time—(dividing
Years and days, and ever gliding
Onwards) has passed by :—And now,
Where’s thy wealth of streets and towers ?
Where thy gay and dazzling hours ?
Where thy crowds of slaves,—and things
That fed on the rich breath of kings ?
Where thy laughter-crowned times ?—

Thou art—what?—a breath, a fame,
In the shadow of thy name
Dwelling, like a ghost unseen ;
Grander than if laurels green
Or the massy gold were spread,
Crown-like, upon thy great head :
Mighty in thy own undoing,
Drawing a fresh life from ruin
And eternal prophecy :—
Thou art gone, but cannot die.
Like a splendour from the sky
Through the silent ether flung,
Like a hoar tradition hung
Glittering in the ear of Time,
Thou art,—like a lamp sublime,
Telling from thy wave-worn tower
Where the raging floods have power,
How ruin lives,—and how Time flies,—
And all that on the dial lies.

A WAR SONG.

ARE the white snows which crown thy hills untrodden,
Are thy sons valiant still,—thy daughters pure,
Ceraunia?—or hath War, which makes the world
Blush in its blood, stained all thy hills and valleys?
Awake! The Turk is coming:—from his den
Where he once slept, lustful, intemperate,
He comes mad as the sea, and blind with hate.
Awake! Bare all your weapons till their light
Dazzles the sky, now sick with coming woe.
Awake! The Turk is on your heart. Awake!—

Awake! 'tis the terror of war;
The Crescent is tossed on the wind;
But our flag flies on high like the perilous star
Of the battle. Before and behind,
Wherever it glitters, it darts
Bright death into tyrannous hearts.

Who are they that now bid us be slaves?

They are foes to the good and the free:
Go bid 'em first fetter the might of the waves;
The Sea may be conquered,—but we
Have spirits untameable still,
And the strength to be free,—and the will.

The Helots are come: In their eyes

Proud hate and fierce massacre burn,
They hate us,—but shall they despise?

They are come;—shall they ever return?
O God of the Greeks! from thy throne
Look down, and we'll conquer alone.

The world has deserted our need:

The eagle is prey to the hound;—
It *may* be; but first we will battle and bleed,
And when we have crimsoned the ground,
We'll shout at the slaves of the earth,
And die,—'tis the chance of our birth.

Our fathers,—each man was a god,
His will was a law, and the sound
Of his voice like a spirit's was worshipped : he trod,
And thousands fell worshippers 'round :
From the gates of the West to the Sun
He bade, and his bidding was done.

And We—shall we die in our chains,
Who once were as free as the wind ?
Who is it that threatens,—who is it arraigns ?
Are they princes of Europe or Ind ?
Are they kings to the uttermost pole ?—
They are dogs, with a taint on their soul.

Away !—Though our glory has fled,
For a time, and Thermopylæ's past ;
Let us write a *new* name in the blood of our dead,
And again be as free as the blast.
The lion, he reigns as of yore :
Shall the Greek be a slave ?—and no more ?

Away ! for the fight may be ended
Before you arrive at your fame.
Your fathers the land and their dwellings defended,
And left them to you—with a name,
Oh ! keep it : it sounds like a charm :
It will guard you from terror, from harm.

For our life,—it is nothing,—a span :
'Tis the body, and Fame is the heart.
Is there one who rejects the bright lot of a man ?
Let him be the last to depart :
Let him die on his pillow, a slave,—
For us, We have conquered the grave.

SONNET.

A STILL PLACE.

UNDER what beechen shade, or silent oak,
Lies the mute sylvan now,—mysterious Pan?
Once (while rich Peneus and Ilissus ran
Clear from their fountains)—as the morning broke,
'Tis said, the Satyr with Apollo spoke,
And to harmonious strife, with his wild reed,
Challenged the God, whose music was indeed
Divine, and fit for Heaven.—Each play'd, and woke
Beautiful sounds to life, deep melodies:
One blew his pastoral pipe with such nice care,
That flocks and birds all answer'd him; and one
Shook his immortal showers upon the air.
—*That* music hath ascended to the sun;
But where the other?—Speak! ye dells and trees!

SONNET.

TO THE SKY-LARK.

O earliest singer ! O care-charming bird !
Married to morning, by a sweeter hymn
Than priest e'er chaunted from his cloister dim,
At midnight,—or veil'd virgin's holier word
At sun-rise or the paler evening heard ;
To which of all Heaven's young and lovely Hours,
Who wreathe soft light in hyacinthine bowers,
Beautiful spirit, is thy suit preferr'd ?
—Unlike the creatures of this low dull earth,
Still dost thou woo, although thy suit be won ;
And thus thy mistress bright is pleased ever.
Oh ! lose not thou this mark of finer birth ;—
So may'st thou yet live on, from sun to sun,
Thy joy unchecked, thy sweet song silent never.

FINIS.

LONDON :

SHACKELL AND ARROWSMITH, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET.





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Procter, Bryan Waller
The flood of Thessaly

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